

# Critical & Creative Thinking

*The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*

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**Vol 13 Nos 1&2 May/Nov 2005**

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# Welcome to Critical & Creative Thinking

Welcome to Volume 13, Nos. 1 and 2 of *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*.

*Critical & Creative Thinking* is published in May and November. Subscriptions are due in February. Forms are available in this edition. We hope that you will continue your subscription, and if you have any suggestions please send them to us.

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## About the Journal

*Critical & Creative Thinking* is an international journal published under the auspices of The Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA). The focus of the journal is philosophical inquiry with school-age students. What was once called Philosophy for Children has now grown into a sub-discipline of philosophy with its own history, traditions, and pedagogy, and incorporates what could be called philosophical inquiry in the classroom, reflective education and, generally speaking, philosophy in schools as well as related methodologies such as Socratic Dialogue. The journal performs two roles. The first is to publish scholarly research concerning the theory and practice of philosophical inquiry at school level. These articles will appear in the *Research Articles* section. The second is to publish reports of practice, comments on resources, suggestions and ideas about philosophising with school students and so forth, with a view to encouraging professional interchange among those interested in philosophical inquiry with school-age students.

## Aim and Scope

To provide a vehicle for the communication of ideas and a forum for discussion and debate of issues concerning the practice of philosophical inquiry with school-age students.

To promote better teaching and curricular design for the development of critical and creative thinking amongst school-age students through increased understanding and use of philosophical inquiry in the classroom.

To enrich the understanding of philosophy and philosophical inquiry as well as its role in the development of good thinking and good judgment.

To increase interaction and collaboration between the academic community of scholars in universities and teachers in schools on matters of logic, epistemology, creativity, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, inquiry, philosophy of science, mind, personhood, community, understanding, learning, thinking, dialogue, discussion, and related matters concerning philosophy, inquiry and classroom pedagogy.

To promote discussion of the place of philosophy in the national and school curriculum and its infusion into the present curriculum, as well as the place of philosophy in the intellectual, creative, moral and social development of individuals.

## **Notes for Contributors**

All contributions will be considered for publication. Articles will be subject to the normal processes of peer-review for scholarly refereed journals, including blind reviewing by at least two referees drawn from the Editorial Committee (or from other international scholars with special expertise as necessary).

Manuscripts should be prepared with a title page. Include all relevant information about the author; institutional affiliation (if applicable), email address and contact details. The title page will be removed prior to review.

Articles should be 1.5 or double spaced in 12 point. Please keep formatting to a minimum. Use footnote citation with a list of references at the end. Tables and text in side-by-side columns should be placed in a table with 1 point border. Detailed information on manuscript preparation and referencing style will be available on the FAPSA website. An announcement will be posted on the P4C-list.

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Send all contributions to: P.Cam@unsw.edu.au

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# Cultivating reason-giving: an alternative paradigm

Carol Collins & Sue Knight (University of South Australia)

## Abstract

The argument of this paper forms part of an ongoing project (The Cultivating Reason-Giving Project) grounded in both philosophy and cognitive psychology. In the initial stage of the project's aim is nothing less than the development of a functional and effective programme for fostering logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking, in short, a programme designed to foster the disposition to think well. (We take it that a programme is functional if it is shown to work within the constraints of prevailing educational structures, and effective if empirical evaluation demonstrates the readiness to think well in complex social and personal domains.) As a first stage, we have developed a model for embedding ethical inquiry into the Society & Environment curriculum area. In this two-part paper we describe the implementation and empirical evaluation of this philosophy-based education programme.

## **Part A. Education for a just democracy: the role of ethical inquiry within the Society & Environment Curriculum**

Introduction: Education for thinking well

This paper outlines one strand of an ongoing research project we have called 'The Cultivating Reason-Giving Project'. We begin with the aim of the project.

It has long been argued that education should be directed towards both individual and social ends.<sup>1</sup> In the West, the social end has been identified with the development of a just democracy, so that the fundamental goal of education is seen as one of equipping individuals to partake of the good life as members of a democratic society which extends the potentiality of the good life to all.

Beyond this there is little agreement as to how these social and individual ends are to be spelled out. Proposed individual goals include the mastery of basic skills and fundamental processes, initiation into a body of knowledge, the realisation of individual intellectual potential, preparation for work, the development of moral character and emotional and physical well-being. A variety of social ends have also been advanced, such as maintaining the order and stability of society through inculcating respect for and obedience to the law, and equipping individuals to challenge unjust social conditions.

There is no need to engage in a full discussion of these proposed educational goals; rather, our focus is on what is surely necessary for the realisation of individual good within a just democracy (or individual and social well being for short), namely, that individuals engage in what we will call 'justificatory thinking' in making decisions and in exercising their votes. Justificatory thinking, or as it is sometimes called 'thinking as argument'<sup>2</sup> is as the name suggests, thinking that is aimed at the justification of beliefs; thinking which is driven by a desire to get at the truth, rather than (say) to persuade. But more than this, individual and social well-being depends upon individuals justifying their beliefs rationally, knowledgably and with appropriate regard to the welfare of others. It is the need for individuals to make decisions on the basis of arguments that are both logically cogent (i.e., which have true premises and which are either inductively strong or deductively valid) and ethically grounded (i.e. with premises which

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<sup>1</sup> In the West, the argument goes back at least as far as Plato. See his *Republic*, translated by H.D.P. Lee, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Kuhn (1991).

express appropriate regard for the welfare of others). This notion of appropriate regard for the welfare of others must be spelled out in terms of a set of criteria for judging the moral rightness and wrongness of human actions; a point to which we return in the second of our papers.

It seems clear that individual well-being depends centrally on a readiness to base beliefs, judgments and conclusions on logically cogent arguments. Only then will individuals be empowered to exercise control of their futures and to manage these futures well. Further, democracy requires citizens to make sound judgements in relation to complex social issues; just democracy requires that they exhibit appropriate regard for the welfare of others as well as of themselves in so judging.<sup>3</sup> For convenience, in what follows we will use the terms 'thinking well' or 'good thinking' to refer to justificatory thinking which is both logically cogent and ethically grounded.

Our concern is with the role education might play in fostering both the capability and the readiness to engage widely in such thinking. This talk of readiness and wide engagement is important. Optimal individual functioning within a just democracy depends upon individuals exercising a capacity for logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking in all the judgments and decisions they make. As Tishman, Jay & Perkins (1993) point out, one can have the capability to play the piano (for example) yet rarely exercise that capability. Moreover, an individual might well display a tendency to think well in a restricted domain, for example, mathematics, yet fail to do so in relation to social or personal issues; hence, the

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<sup>3</sup> This is to adopt what is sometimes referred to as the 'reasons conception' of the kind of thinking requisite for individual and social well being. On this conception reason lies at the heart of such thinking. Here the implication is that the reasons conception is but one of many competing conceptions. Yet it is difficult to see just what these competing conceptions might be. Perhaps one could hold a 'problem solving conception' or a 'creative thinking conception', that is, hold that what is central to thinking for individual and social good is the exercise of problem solving strategies or creativity. However, when these conceptions are looked at more closely they are found to depend upon the reasons conception.

importance of exercising the relevant capability widely. This readiness to exercise the capability for logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking can be described as a disposition to think well.<sup>4</sup> Although we cannot give the argument here,<sup>5</sup> we take it that the development of the disposition to engage widely in thinking well depends not only on the development of the appropriate skills, but also on the development of certain epistemological understandings; more precisely, an understanding that justification of beliefs is both possible and necessary (i.e., that such justification matters).

The development of thinking well through philosophical inquiry

Like many before us, then, we argue that the broad development of the disposition to think well is a necessary condition for achieving what has long been held as the fundamental goal of education, namely that of equipping individuals to partake of the good life as members of a just democratic society. Of course this is Lipman's argument: his landmark *Philosophy for Children* programme is directed towards the development of this very disposition to think well; a disposition which Lipman sees as central to the functioning of a just democratic society.<sup>6</sup> As is well known, Lipman's programme is based on the idea that philosophy should be included as a separate subject within the curriculum primarily to provide opportunities for the development of thinking skills and strategies, as well as of the disposition to use them. His curriculum is grounded in the theoretical work of Dewey, as well as on Socratic dialogue and is carefully sequenced, presenting increasingly complex

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<sup>4</sup> We shall use the terms 'readiness,' 'tendency' and 'disposition' interchangeably. The difficulties with the notion of a disposition are well known (see Quine, 1960, p. 33 and what follows) and we can give at best a definition involving elements of vagueness; to say that someone has a disposition to act or think in a certain way is to say that on the whole, or under most circumstances, the individual in question does act or think in that way.

<sup>5</sup> We have spelled out this argument in a number of places. See most recently, Collins (2005).

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan (1980).

ideas (from junior primary through to senior secondary levels). Further, in line with Vygotsky's theory of social learning, the programme emphasises the importance of engaging students in collaborative dialogue with their peers, that is, of transforming classrooms into 'communities of inquiry'.

Unusually amongst 'thinking skills' programmes,<sup>7</sup> Lipman's Philosophy for Children curriculum has been extensively and favourably evaluated, with findings showing improvements recorded in logical, and to a lesser degree ethical reasoning, and general gains in reading comprehension, mathematics and IQ scores (Lipman, 1987 & 1988; Knight, 1988; Trickey & Topping, 2004). This programme then, has fared positively in relation to the development of the skills of logical cogency and ethical groundedness, and also demonstrates transfer of explicitly taught reasoning skills to educationally relevant tasks. If we standardly<sup>8</sup> take the demonstration of transfer to demonstrate the development of a disposition, these empirical findings point towards the effectiveness of the Philosophy for Children programme in developing the disposition to engage widely in thinking well. It should be noted however, that transfer to everyday reasoning tasks, that is to reasoning about matters of personal and social significance is yet to be established, but clearly such transfer is our central goal.

The strong empirical support for Lipman's programme gathered over the last three decades, together with the programme's strong theoretical base, might well lead us to find Philosophy for Children entrenched in curricula at state or national level within Australia. Yet interestingly, Lipman's Philosophy for Children has had relatively little impact on either curricula or classroom practice at a local level, and this is also the case when we look to similar educational settings in the United Kingdom and the United States. While we find 'Philosophy for

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<sup>7</sup> Resnick (1987) provides a comprehensive review of the relevant research.

<sup>8</sup> Within cognitive psychology transfer is tied closely to the development of a disposition. See Resnick (1987).

Children' is employed by individual teachers and schools, the programme has not been taken up widely, or at a system level, despite the fact that it is strongly grounded in philosophical and psychological research, and that it has been comprehensively evaluated with the findings pointing to significant educational gains. Instead, we are far more likely (in Australia at least) to find teachers working with the 'Thinker's Hats' or 'Thinker's Keys', or with values clarification exercises,<sup>9</sup> even though we have little or no reason to believe that such activities will help students to become logically cogent and ethically grounded thinkers. Further, in no Australian state do we find the 'Philosophy for Children' programme included within the official curriculum frameworks.<sup>10</sup>

This should come as no surprise: Lipman (1985, p. 40) himself has long argued that educators are likely to respond that, '...philosophy cannot be made a required subject...without an overall reassessment of the curriculum'; a reassessment they are loathe to make. No doubt some such reassessment is needed. As Lipman (1985, p. 40), puts it, '...[one] must suspect that much is presently taught for no other reason than that it has long been customary to do so—the same reason as that for which philosophy has been excluded.' There is little indication however, that any such reassessment of the curriculum is likely in the near future, in Australia at least. Most if not all Australian states have recently undertaken redevelopment of their curriculum frameworks, in each case emphasising the development of both logical and ethical thinking skills across the traditional learning areas. A survey of these documents reveals a general emphasis on the development of logical and ethical thinking, but no place has been made for philosophy as an additional learning area. Queensland's 'New Basics: Productive Pedagogies' (State of Queensland, 2001) does adopt aspects of the pedagogy of 'Philosophy for Children', but this

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<sup>9</sup> Collins (1998).

<sup>10</sup> Yoram Harpaz (n.d.) offers a detailed discussion of the structural and systematic obstacles that currently impede a wider uptake of philosophical inquiry approaches in schools at an international level.

pedagogy is to be applied across the traditional learning areas.<sup>11</sup>

Currently then, the most pressing concern for teachers aiming to develop students' thinking abilities, is likely to be locating thinking skills programs that fit within their already hectic timetables and the curriculum and school structures as they stand, as well as within their existing knowledge base (bearing in mind that curriculum courses within Australian teacher education programs are generally restricted to the traditional learning areas). On the basis of such criteria, it seems likely that teachers would rate the 'Six Thinking Hats' highly, while discounting 'Philosophy for Children' as too far removed from the realities of the classroom. After all, the 'Six Thinking Hats' and similar programs are designed to be used across the existing learning areas, and their use does not demand additional disciplinary knowledge. We argue then, that the Philosophy for Children programme is not functional, that is, it does not fit easily within the constraints of prevailing educational structures.

In light of this seriously limited uptake of Lipman's programme, we might be forgiven if we were to wonder whether it is possible to develop a thinking skills programme which will work effectively within current education constraints. Perhaps in the end it may not really matter. We propose that it does matter, that it is as important as it has ever been to develop students' capacities and readiness to think well. The case is not hard to argue. Wide-ranging empirical research in psychology demonstrates that individuals make systematic errors in reasoning tasks designed to assess their abilities in problem-solving, decision-making and in the justification of their beliefs. People on the whole perform poorly on tests of deduction (Sternberg & Ben-Zeev, 2001) and fail to appreciate

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<sup>11</sup> As Philip Cam (2003, p. 8) explains, the recommended pedagogies in New Basics have '...many points of contact with Lipman's idea of the classroom as a Community of Inquiry...[including]...the development of substantive conversation and sustained dialogue in the classroom...[and] attention to higher-order thinking and critical analysis'.

the distinction between necessary and sufficient evidence, readily accepting data that, at best, only suggests a belief may be true (Gilovich, 1991). Indeed, adults reason, both inductively and deductively, at about the level of proficiency of the average Year 6 student (Lipman, 1985). People in general tend to rely heavily on intuition and heuristics in decision-making and matters of judgment rather than on employing deliberate reasoning processes (Sloman, 1999; Kahneman, 2002). They succumb readily to belief and confirmatory bias in their reasoning efforts, drawing on positive and confirming evidence and neglecting alternative hypotheses (Stanovich & West, 2002). And in relation to informal reasoning the majority perform poorly on argument tasks where they are required to generate evidence, counterarguments and rebuttals; they fail to understand the distinction between evidence and opinion, think that knowledge, truth and sound judgement are fundamentally a matter of personal preference or subjective taste and as such, consider all views to be equally valid (Kuhn, 1991). The task facing us then is one of developing an educational programme designed to foster thinking well that is both effective and functional.

#### An alternative paradigm

As indicated earlier, we take it that a case has been made for including discussion-based philosophical inquiry in school curricula. We must then turn our attention to the place philosophical inquiry should occupy in the curriculum. We argue for a model which locates philosophy within the existing curriculum areas, rather than making it an additional and separate subject. In earlier papers we make a detailed case for this alternative embedded model, in which philosophical inquiry is infused into the curriculum areas.<sup>12</sup>

The most common objection to integrating or infusing philosophy within the existing curriculum areas must be acknowledged here however; it reflects a genuine concern that the skills, procedures and

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<sup>12</sup> Knight & Collins (2000).

dispositions at the heart of philosophical inquiry are at risk of being watered down or worse still, lost altogether if philosophy is not afforded its own prominent place in the curriculum. Lipman spells out this concern explicitly:

...[E]fforts at "infusion" are bound to be fumbling, haphazard, and unavailing as long as students are not permitted to examine directly and for themselves the standards, criteria, concepts, and values that are needed to evaluate whatever it is they are talking and thinking about. Merely to encourage differences of opinion, open discussion, and debate will not provide a comfortable escalator to the improvement of thinking. This will happen only if students are given access to the tools of inquiry, the methods and principles of reasoning, practice in concept analysis, experience in critical reading and writing, opportunities for creative description and narration as well as in the formulation of arguments and explanations, and a community setting in which ideas and intellectual contexts can be fluently and openly exchanged. These are educational conditions that provide an infrastructure upon which a sound superstructure of good judgment can be erected. (Lipman, 2003, pp. 290-291)

And undoubtedly Lipman is right. Each and every one of these elements of collaborative philosophical inquiry must be upheld in the classroom if we are to succeed in our efforts to help students think well about important real-world issues. But Lipman (2003, p. 291) goes on to ask:

...[H]ow else are we to make these intellectual tools available to...[students] if not through a series of courses in philosophy, redesigned so as to be accessible to children? If they are afforded no opportunity to compare and contrast the reasons people have for calling things true

and good, how can they be expected to know what they are talking about when they are asked to decide which statements are true and which are not or which things are good and which are not? (Lipman, 2003, p. 291)

Again without question, Lipman's stand-alone Philosophy for Children program, along with many of its subsequent adaptations, fulfill these central functions of philosophical inquiry and in so doing foster the development of thinking well. Yet such exemplars need not preclude the successful development and implementation of an integrative approach in which the intellectual tools of philosophical inquiry are made available to students and in which ample opportunities are given for students to practice and refine their use, all within the context of thinking about the philosophical questions and issues embedded in the existing curriculum areas.

We have now made a start in articulating this alternative embedding model. More particularly, we are working with an educational programme that embeds ethical inquiry within the existing curriculum areas, and we are doing this both in schools and in teacher-training programmes. We argue that not only is this embedded programme effective (in that empirical evaluation of the programme demonstrates the development of a readiness to think well), but that it has significant functional advantages over the dominant separate curriculum model. That is, the embedded model is more likely to succeed given the constraints of the prevailing educational structures.

For now we turn to our work in designing a philosophy-based educational program that fits within the existing curriculum. We argue that there is a curriculum area which stands out as an ideal locus for such a program, namely, Society and Environment.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This learning area has been and continues to be known by various names across Australia and beyond, including 'Social Studies', 'Social and Environmental Education' and 'Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE). We will adopt the current South Australian title (and well known abbreviation) that is, 'Society & Environment' and 'S&E'.

This curriculum area is underpinned by a seemingly unlimited range of significant ethical questions. (Consider the following for example: 'Would it matter if the yellow-footed rock wallaby became extinct?' 'Should Aboriginal Australians be compensated for past bad treatment?' 'Is mandatory sentencing fair?' 'Should asylum seekers be held in mandatory detention?' 'Is it wrong to kill whales for scientific research?') And ethics is surely the field of philosophy closest to individuals' everyday concerns. After all, moral decision-making is an inevitable and troubling feature of human existence. Clearly, ethical questions are embedded within other curriculum areas too, notably Health and Science, and as such should be raised and dealt with accordingly. But unlike science (say) where the central goal of the curriculum area is to develop students' knowledge and understanding both of the physical world and of the procedures of scientific inquiry, the primary purpose of the S&E learning area is to develop in students the disposition and ability to think well about important complex social and environmental issues. We will say that the Society & Environment curriculum area is philosophically, and more particularly ethically, rich curriculum area: where the embedded philosophical issues are ignored, the point of the curriculum area is lost. Yet a review of the literature and curriculum materials in the field of social and environmental education reveals that S&E is all but void of ethical inquiry.

#### S&E: an ethics free zone?

Wide-ranging research on questioning indicates that the vast majority of classroom questions, including questions from within Society & Environment call for little more than clarification or recall, that on the whole, very few ethical questions are raised in the classroom by either teachers or their students (Perrott, 1988; Sullivan & Clarke, 1991; Myhill & Dunkin, 2002; Harrop & Swinson, 2003). And two local empirical studies (Collins, 1998; Lucas, 2000) targeting the area of ethical questioning in S&E lend direct support to

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these more general findings. While the primary teachers surveyed in these studies overwhelmingly agreed that ethical questions are worth asking in the primary school context, only a tiny minority (12%) indicated that they would consider ever asking those cited, even if teaching parallel topics as part of their S&E programs. The questions related either to the topic of 'food' (for example, 'Is it acceptable to keep battery hens?' and 'Is it ever OK to eat a pet?'), or to the topic of 'Indigenous Australians' (for example, 'Should Australian government members apologise to Aboriginal Australians over the stolen generation?' and 'Should mining companies ever be allowed to mine on sacred sites?').

The reasons for this widespread reluctance among teachers to raise ethical questions as part of their programs are well-known, ranging from concerns that attempts to answer them will lead to indoctrination of students, to concerns that asking controversial questions may offend some students, their parents, or the school administration, and seem to be fuelled by the prevailing relativist emphasis on tolerance and acceptance of all views as equal in the field of education. Brown (1991) and Newmann & Onosko (1990) also discuss possible barriers to the teaching of controversial issues. Such fears and concerns appear to be generated primarily however, by a general lack of awareness and understanding that there are well-established procedures within philosophy for making progress in answering ethical, and even highly controversial questions; procedures which would avoid and allay teachers' fears and concerns. In other words, teachers themselves appear to lack the epistemological understandings we would argue underpin a readiness to engage widely in ethical inquiry. Even where teachers recognise the importance of asking and discussing ethical questions in their classrooms, they will in all likelihood lack the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. After all, philosophical inquiry is not a common feature of contemporary teacher-training programmes (Collins, 2005).

What is more, the curriculum resources underpinning social and environmental education do relatively little to counter this shortfall in teachers' knowledge and skills in the area of ethical inquiry; on the whole, authors either abstain from mentioning the possibility of raising ethical questions in primary classrooms, or they acknowledge the seriousness of current controversial issues (particularly in "these troubled times"), recommend teaching about these issues, but offer little or no practical advice on how to deal with such complex and controversial ethical questions or issues once they have been raised in the classroom. There are noteworthy exceptions of course. Paul, Binker and Charbonneau (1987) and Paul, Binker, Jensen and Kreklau's (1987) handbooks for remodeling social studies lessons are helpful at least in raising the embedded ethical questions in standard S&E topics, while various teaching associations with a focus on social justice provide lesson plans which raise ethical questions relating to current social issues, even if they offer few guidelines as to how ethical inquiry should proceed in the classroom.<sup>14</sup> Many of the exercises and discussion plans available within the burgeoning collection of Philosophy for Children curriculum materials are also relevant to social and environmental education.<sup>15</sup> But unless teachers are au fait with the content of these curriculum materials and trained in the pedagogy of conducting ethical inquiry in the classroom, they will be unlikely to see the connections between philosophy and S&E, ill-equipped to adapt them to their empirically-based S&E curriculum units and as a result unable to implement them effectively.

### Conclusion

In summary, then, the Society & Environment learning area (in Australian primary schools at least) is driven by a strong empirical research emphasis; the learning area appears to be lacking the ethical inquiry

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<sup>14</sup> See for example, Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; Otero, 2001; Preskill, Vermilya & Otero, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Lipman & Sharp (1985); Cam (1995); de Haan, MacColl & McCutcheon (1995).

approach most likely to affect real progress towards achieving the central aim of S&E and indeed, education more generally; that is, to help students develop the ability and disposition to participate fully as citizens in a just democratic society. Making such progress depends on transforming the S&E curriculum area from its current empirical research platform to a learning area which encompasses and deals effectively with both the empirical and the ethical components of existing and emerging social and environmental topics. We want now to turn to an account of what is involved in designing, implementing and evaluating a functional ethical inquiry based program for teaching Society & Environment in the classroom.

### **Part B. Ethical inquiry in Society & Environment: An intervention study**

#### Introduction

This paper relates to an ongoing research project we have called the 'Cultivating Reason Giving Project'. The aim of the project, like that of Mathew Lipman's Philosophy for Children program, is one of equipping individuals to think well; more precisely, to make complex social and individual decisions on the basis of arguments that are both logically cogent and ethically grounded. We take it that an argument is logically cogent if it has true premises and is either inductively strong or deductively valid; and we claim that an ethically grounded argument is not only logically cogent, but has premises which express appropriate regard for the welfare of others.

Although we cannot argue this point here, we take it that showing appropriate regard for the welfare of others involves:

- (1) The adoption of a consequentialist moral principle according to which the rightness and wrongness of actions are judged on the basis of both a general notion of good and harm and the overall balance of good and harm produced.

- (2) An understanding that, among the needs of human (and more generally, sentient) beings, certain needs are more urgent than others; so that failure to

satisfy these more urgent needs results in greater degrees of harm.

(3) An understanding that the balance of good and harm produced by an action depends upon the particular circumstances in which the action is taken.

Exercise of ethically grounded thinking then, involves the employment of the following set of skills: judging consequences in terms of good and harm, weighing the good and harm produced by possible alternative actions, judging the relative urgency of the needs of sentient beings, and taking circumstances into account. Moreover, the wide application of the skills of ethically grounded thinking depends on the development of a general disposition to care about other sentient beings, just as the wide exercise of the skills of logical cogency depends on the development of a disposition to care for the truth. In what follows, we shall refer to this disposition to care for others as 'empathy'.

We should note that our goal is not merely one of equipping individuals with skills, but more than this, fostering a readiness to employ these skills widely. In other words, we are aiming at the inculcation of a disposition to engage widely in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking. We can't go into details here, but very briefly, we take it that the development of the disposition to engage widely in thinking well depends not only on the development of the appropriate skills, but also on the development of certain epistemological understandings; more precisely, an understanding that justification of beliefs, including ethical beliefs, is both possible and necessary (that is, that such justification matters). Like those before us then, we argue that the broad development of the disposition to think well is a necessary condition for achieving what has long been held as the fundamental goal of education, namely that of equipping individuals to partake of the good life as members of a just democratic society.

Yet, our ongoing investigations within the Cultivating Reason-Giving Project indicate that this aim is unlikely to be met under the constraints of

prevailing educational structures. Indeed, we argue that there is a need to diverge from the dominant educational model for the development of thinking well, the model based on Lipman's Philosophy for Children curriculum which makes philosophy an additional and separate curriculum area, in which purpose-written stories (or increasingly, stories from general children's literature or excerpts from various media) serve as a springboard for philosophical inquiry discussions.

In earlier papers we make a detailed case for an alternative model, an embedded model, in which philosophical inquiry is infused into the curriculum areas, one which locates philosophy within the existing curriculum areas.<sup>16</sup> We have now made a start in articulating this alternative embedding model. More particularly, we are working with an educational programme that embeds ethical inquiry within the Society & Environment curriculum area, and we are doing this both in schools and in teacher-training programmes. We argue that not only is this embedded programme effective (in that empirical evaluation of the programme demonstrates the development of a readiness to think well), but that it has significant functional advantages over the dominant separate curriculum model. That is, the embedded model is more likely to succeed given the constraints of the prevailing educational structures. We now turn to an account of our work in designing, implementing and evaluating a functional ethical inquiry based programme for teaching Society & Environment in the primary classroom.

#### Ethical Inquiry within S&E: An intervention study

We can be brief here about design. Let's take a commonly taught S&E topic of 'Rainforests', for example. Clearly, our aim in teaching a unit of work on rainforests would be for students to engage in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking about whether or not the earth's rainforests should continue to be cleared. The question 'Should we continue clearing rainforests?' would be the unit's guiding

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<sup>16</sup> Knight & Collins (2000).

question; that is, it would direct the structure of the unit. In other words, everything in the unit would be studied for the purpose of answering this question. This ethical guiding question clearly gives rise to a second empirical (guiding) question, namely 'What is happening to the earth's rainforests, and why?' There is no need to go into detail here of the ways in which these questions might be dealt with, except to make the obvious point that a thorough examination of the ethical questions requires engaging students in communities of ethical inquiry (in Lipman's sense).

The implementation of such a program requires more detailed description to allow us to demonstrate the program's functionality, in other words, the extent to which it fits within the constraints of prevailing educational structures. To this end, we describe an intervention study in which we implemented the newly developed S&E programme in collaboration with five South Australian primary classroom teachers. We will begin by describing the overall framework of the study.

Several upper primary level teachers were approached to join the study, either through the South Australian Association of Philosophy in the Classroom (SAAPIC), or through direct contact with principals of schools, identified because of their interest in implementing programmes designed to improve students' thinking abilities and dispositions. The teachers' professional backgrounds were diverse, as was their degree of familiarity with the Philosophy for Children movement. Five teachers, working in different schools across the metropolitan area of Adelaide, volunteered to take an active part in implementing the newly developed S&E programme in the first two terms of a new school year. In each case, their students agreed to act as participants in the study. The research project took the form of a matched intervention study, that is, each of these five classes was matched with a control group from within the same school. We will focus here on the experimental group classes only.

The student participants ranged in age from ten to twelve years and were enrolled at either year six or year seven level. Their school settings were socio-

economically diverse in terms of the families they served, ranging from low, to middle, to high socio-economic status. While students from across the five schools were largely of Australian-European or Australian-Asian background, in one class there were a number of Aboriginal Australian students, as well as several students who spoke English as their second language. There was considerable variation across the population in relation to students' literacy levels. It seemed important to include a diverse student population in the study, given that our goal is to support all students to engage widely in thinking well. Moreover, we would argue as others have done at length, that the opportunity to participate in educational programmes which foster the development of thinking well, should be extended to all students, rather than be restricted to gifted and talented student groups, as has often been the case with various thinking skills programmes.

Implementing the newly developed (and in many ways, radically different) Society & Environment curriculum in five schools by way of a six-month intervention afforded many challenges for all involved. It demanded considerable commitment on the part of the participating teachers, who were required to undertake an intensive professional development programme and to work collaboratively with the researcher in planning and implementing two term-length units of work, while at the same time adopting a methodology that was markedly different from their usual approach to teaching Society & Environment. All five teachers participated in a three day summer school in which:

- 1) Teachers were introduced to the structure of the intervention study and to our underlying aim to foster the development of the disposition to engage widely in thinking well (including a spelling out of the notions of 'logical cogency' and 'ethical groundedness'.
- 2) They were introduced to Philosophy for Children and associated curriculum materials.

- 3) They participated in and evaluated a number of community of ethical inquiry sessions, in particular, Chapter 1 of Lipman's (1985) 'Lisa' and the associated curriculum materials (Lipman & Sharp, 1985).
- 4) They worked collaboratively to develop outlines for S&E units of work which incorporated both ethical and empirical inquiry.

During the intervention period, we worked with individual teachers to develop the units of work more fully, as well as working collaboratively in guiding a single weekly ethical inquiry discussion. The teachers worked alone, however, in facilitating both the additional weekly ethical inquiry sessions, and all of the empirical research-based lessons and activities. The students participated in two lengthy testing procedures and found themselves in unfamiliar territory, engaged as they were in thinking about and discussing ethical issues with their peers, their teacher, and with the visiting researcher (and at times her supervisor).

Attempting to meet the needs of individual teachers and their diverse student groups across a range of educational settings was demanding. Working in situ with this diverse group of teachers and students over a six-month period did, however, allow us to observe firsthand the reality of the practical disruptions and constraints that impinge upon day-to-day classroom routines. Discussions in one school were regularly interrupted by the public address system for example, announcing details of an assembly, choir practice or parent interviews, or requesting that individual students make their way to the school office. In all schools there was a regular stream of individual student exits and entrances as they attended music lessons or special tutoring sessions. Parents or staff members called in at times to discuss unrelated matters with the classroom teachers. Squeezing thirty chairs into a circle at the front of the classroom proved difficult and disruptive at times, particularly in the early stages of the intervention. And sport days, guest speakers, excursions and camps

often meant S&E lessons were cut short or rescheduled.

In short, we were afforded a rare opportunity to observe and participate in the implementation of a new approach to S&E, as it occurred within the existing and extremely busy weekly timetable and the often disruptive daily routines. And it is surely important to create such an opportunity in educational research. Program writers need to understand and meet such challenges head-on if they are serious about developing and evaluating educational programmes that are both functional and effective in helping students to think well; that is, programmes which classroom teachers will adopt and maintain in their classrooms because they view them as both workable and worthwhile in terms of educational and social outcomes. Brown (1997) makes a similar point about the need to engage in educational research in both laboratory and classroom settings, the latter in active collaboration with teachers and students.

The intervention took place in the first two terms of the school year, during which time students were engaged in up to five Society & Environment lessons per week; these included both research-based lessons and at least one or two weekly whole class ethical inquiry discussions. The community of inquiry discussions (most often led collaboratively by the researcher and the classroom teacher) typically lasted for around one hour, although they were extended at times when student interest and engagement were at a high level of intensity. For eight weeks of the first term, students from all five classes studied the same specially written unit of work on the topic of 'The Treatment of Animals', which incorporated several exercises and discussion plans from Lipman & Sharp's (1985) 'Ethical Inquiry Manual to Accompany Lisa'. The programme in the second term comprised activities and discussions drawn from five specially written units of work, the topics of which varied from class to class

School A participants studied a history-based unit ('The Ancient Greeks'). School B students studied an environmental unit of work on the topic of

'Antarctica'. School C's topic of 'The Federation of Australia' was dictated by the school's scope and sequence statement as well as by the currency of the issue. School D participants studied the broad environmental topic of 'Ecologically Sustainable Development', while School E undertook a unit of study into the then emerging topic of 'Reality TV'. In each classroom, the unit of work was implemented in its entirety over a period of seven to nine weeks. The constraints of this paper do not permit the inclusion of a detailed qualitative report of our experiences and observations as the units of work were implemented in all five classrooms, even though all are worthy of such documentation. The feedback from students and teachers, along with our own anecdotal observations from across the five classrooms, indicate clearly that the S&E programme is functional; it fits well within the constraints of prevailing educational structures. Moreover, four of the five teachers involved in the intervention continue to teach their S&E programme using the approach outlined here.

While these observations and informal evaluations give cause for optimism, we clearly need to do much more in order to determine whether the programme will be effective in developing the disposition to engage widely in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking. After all, qualitative reports of interventions are plentiful in the literature associated with the Philosophy for Children movement. Philosophers, educators and researchers involved in the field have long been aware of and seem keen to share the benefits they have found in employing a community of inquiry approach in their teaching. Their publications contain, amongst other things, a significant number of case studies describing classroom and whole school interventions and experiences, transcripts and analyses of philosophical discussions and evaluations of student and teacher attitudes to classroom discussions.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See for example, Daniel 2000; Daniel & Michel 2000; Hinton 2003; Sigurthorsdoitir 2001.

Yet, any number of descriptive classroom case studies, motivating as they might be, are unlikely to provide evidence enough to persuade those who make the ultimate decisions and recommendations about pedagogy and curriculum that changes need to be implemented in both pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development as well as in primary classrooms, if we are to succeed in helping students to think well about matters of personal and social significance. Rather, we need to test our theories empirically and then approach education ministers, administrators and educators with sound empirical evidence in hand. We need to demonstrate empirically that educational programmes based on philosophical inquiry and dialogue, including the S&E programme recommended here, are both functional and achievable in contemporary classroom settings, and that the implementation of such programs by adequately trained teachers will bring about the development of the disposition to engage widely in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking.

Our remaining task then, is to report the empirical evaluation of the intervention study, in an attempt to demonstrate transfer of the readiness to think well in complex real-world social and personal domains. We will provide a brief account of the quantitative component of the project and the subsequent findings of the study.

#### The empirical evaluation

We developed a questionnaire,<sup>18</sup> the first section of which attempts to examine participants' abilities (and readiness) to evaluate a number of different kinds of reasons presented in support of opposing views on a range of ethical issues. It was hypothesised that participation in the intervention's ethical inquiry discussions would lead to an improvement in participants' ability (and readiness) to evaluate reasons presented in support of opposing views, relating to a series of ethical issues. The ethical issues selected for use in this study included:

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<sup>18</sup> The questionnaire is available for viewing on request from the authors.

- whether the Australian Prime Minister should apologise to indigenous Australians for past wrongs
- whether whaling and seal hunting should continue
- whether mining should cease or building a dam should commence
- whether wild animals that have killed a human being should be hunted and killed.

The topics for these ethical issues were based on recent Australian social and environmental issues and were selected on the basis that they would be familiar, credible and, hopefully, of interest to the cohort of participating students.

The eight ethical issues (four in the pre-test and four in the post-test) were presented in a standard form:

- a) A scenario was presented in which a number of children were discussing the issue at hand.
- b) A brief overview of the issue was given in which two main opposing views on the issue were presented.
- c) It was explained that the reasons given by the children (in the scenario) in support of their views on the issue were presented on the following two pages.
- d) The participants were asked to rate the strength of each of the reasons on a five-point scale ranging from 'not really a reason' to 'an excellent reason'.

The 'Whaling' issue from Form A serves as an example of the test scenarios:

A group of students was discussing a brochure they'd read about whaling. Some people from countries like Japan and Norway want to hunt and kill whales. It is part of their tradition and culture; they have always done it. They use all parts of the whale for food, oil, soap, ornaments etc., some for themselves, others for exporting. On the other hand, some

environmental groups say that whaling is wrong. They are concerned about the effect it might have on the natural balance of the ocean. The teacher asked the students to give reasons for their views on whaling. Their responses are listed on the following two pages. How do you rate these reasons?

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit participants' stances on the four ethical issues raised in the previous section. Participants were also asked to provide underlying reasons for their stance in relation to one of these issues. This crucial component of the questionnaire was included as a means of gathering and analysing data (from participants' written arguments) to identify whether the intervention had impacted positively in terms of transfer of the disposition to engage widely in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking; that is, whether the skills and dispositions developed as a result of the intervention would transfer to a context other than the dialogue-based context in which the skills and dispositions had been fostered.

#### Coding the data

Drawing on previous work from within cognitive psychology<sup>19</sup> we developed a three-step coding system in order to analyse the participants' written responses in terms of argument quality. In brief, the first step involves identifying the number of reasons offered; the second step applies a rating to each of the reasons offered based on the degree to which the reasons were elaborated or supported (that is, a complexity score was assigned to reasons); step three provided an overall quality of argument rating in which the reasons offered in the written argument were considered together and in the light of an individual's stance on the issue at hand.

As indicated earlier, there are also several key elements which contribute to effective justificatory thinking about ethical issues, among them, the need to

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<sup>19</sup> See in particular, Anderson, Nguyen-Jahiel, McNurlen, Archodidou, Kim, Reznitskaya, Tillmanns & Gilbert (2001), Kuhn & Udell (2003), and Reznitskaya, Anderson, McNurlen, Nguyen-Jahiel, Archodidou, & Kim (2001).

consider and weigh consequences for all concerned, and to be empathetic when considering the needs of others. The objective of the current study in relation to ethical inquiry in the classroom was simply to identify possible changes in participants' use of these two particular aspects of ethical reasoning in participants written arguments, rather than to categorise individuals according to existing developmental models or to attempt to develop a new model of moral development. In much the same way, while previous research from cognitive psychology into the development of empathy is of some relevance here, the aim of the current study was relatively modest, that is, to identify possible changes in participants' disposition to display empathy on a range of ethical issues. Thus, a two-step coding system relating to participants' application of these two elements of ethical reasoning was devised. Again briefly, each written argument response was firstly given a 'looking to consequences' rating according to the following categories:

1 = No evidence of considering consequences for any group or individual concerned.

2 = Evidence of considering consequences for one group or individual only (for example, considering consequences only for oneself, or for the human beings concerned, or for the animals concerned).

3 = Evidence of considering and weighing consequences for all individuals and groups concerned (for example, considering consequences for all of the human beings and animals concerned).

Secondly, each written argument response was coded in relation to whether participants had exhibited a lack of empathy for the animals they referred to in their written arguments. The following two categories were applied:

0 = No evidence of lack of empathy for animals.

1 = Evidence of a clear lack of empathy for animals.

The empirical analysis of data was undertaken using SPSS, and the major findings of the study are summarised and discussed briefly below.<sup>20</sup>

The findings of the study

1. A highly significant treatment effect was found on the first section of the questionnaire; that is, following the intervention, participants in the experimental group improved in their ability to evaluate reasons presented in support of opposing views in relation to ethical issues, compared to participants in the control group.
2. A significant effect was found on the post-test score in the number of relevant reasons participants offered in their written arguments; that is, following the intervention, participants in the experimental group provided more relevant reasons than did the control group students.
3. A significant effect was found on the post-test score in the complexity of reasons participants offered in their written arguments; that is, following the intervention, the experimental group participants' reasons were found to be more complex than did the control group participants' reasons.
4. A highly significant treatment effect was found in the quality of participants' written arguments; that is, following the intervention, the experimental group participants had significantly higher argument quality scores than did the control group participants.

Participation in the intervention's ethical inquiry discussions, then, lead to a significant change

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<sup>20</sup> A detailed technical description of the empirical analysis is available on request from the authors.

in students' ability to both evaluate arguments and to produce higher quality arguments (in relation to the number and complexity of reasons offered in support of a claim and in terms of an overall quality score), thus bearing out our original hypothesis.

Importantly, the findings also demonstrate transfer of the disposition to think well; that is, from participants' engagement in ethical inquiry sessions, to their attempts at both evaluating reasons presented in support of opposing views in relation to real-world ethical issues and in producing' written arguments about real-world ethical issues.

5. Moreover, the impact of the treatment which resulted in significant improvements in experimental group participants' argument quality scores was shown to be totally independent of pre-existing literacy levels. That is, improvements in argument quality were demonstrated in participants' written arguments regardless of their level of literacy at the outset of the intervention.
6. Further, it was evident that the greatest gains on the post-test argument measure occurred in the case of those students who started at the lowest levels on the argument measure (that is, level 1 'poor' and level 2 'OK') on the pre-test measure.

Clearly, then, students who have either low levels of literacy or low levels of justificatory thinking skills should be afforded regular and ongoing opportunities to engage in ethical inquiry discussions as part of their curriculum-based lessons, particularly considering that it is these students who are most likely to benefit significantly from such opportunities, at least in the short term. These findings deserve the attention of researchers, educators and administrators concerned with the development of thinking well in all students.

7. A highly significant effect was found for the 'Consequences for all' variable at post-test level; that is, the experimental group participants were more likely to consider and weigh consequences for all concerned in their post-test written arguments, than were the control group participants.
  
8. A significant treatment effect was found for the 'Lack of empathy' variable at post-test level; that is, a significant decrease occurred over time in the number of experimental group participants exhibiting a clear lack of empathy in their written arguments, a change not reflected in the written arguments of control group participants.

Participation in the intervention's ethical inquiry discussions, then, led to a significant change in the participants' ability and disposition to consider and weigh consequences for all concerned, and to be empathetic when considering the needs of all concerned, thus bearing out our original hypothesis.

Here too the findings are important in that they demonstrate transfer of the disposition to think well about ethical issues; that is from participants' engagement in ethical inquiry sessions to their attempts at producing written arguments about real-world ethical issues which take into account the weighing of consequences for all concerned, and the need to be empathetic in so doing.

### Conclusion

In summary then, we have made considerable progress towards our goal of developing an educational programme which is both functional and effective in fostering the disposition to engage widely in logically cogent and ethically grounded thinking. This program, which embeds ethical inquiry within social and environmental education, is surely deserving of a place in a curriculum aimed at equipping individuals to partake of the good life as members of a democratic society which extends the potentiality of the good life to all.

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## A report into the effects of a project using storytelling and the Community of Inquiry in six primary schools

Julie Dawid (The Village Storytelling Centre, Glasgow)

### Background to the Project: The Village Storytelling Centre

The Village Storytelling Centre is a small community project in Greater Pollok, an area of social regeneration in the south of Glasgow. The Village runs storytelling and related activities at the centre, in local schools and in nearby Crookston Castle.

### Greater Pollok

Greater Pollok is an area of South West Glasgow characterised by low density housing, few amenities or community services and very few leisure or recreational opportunities. In 1999 the area was given Social Inclusion Partnership status due to the recognition that it had many problems which needed additional support in order to address. These included:

- High levels of unemployment
- Large numbers of people in poor health
- A higher than average percentage of lone parents and low numbers of childcare services
- Concerns that so many young people were leaving school with no qualifications
- Many households with high debt and low incomes
- Few opportunities for families to improve their quality of life (Greater Pollok SIP 2005)

### Storytelling - The Village's work

Research into the effects of storytelling on young children has shown it to be effective in enhancing communication skills and even improving problem solving and maths, while other studies have confirmed a 'significant positive association' between story listening and immuno-enhancement in the brain, as compared with reading (Carter-Liggett, 1995). It is also a very accessible and human form of performing art that provides a wonderful return to the basics of human communication in today's increasingly high-tech, multimedia and alienating society.

Primary school classes from the local community have the opportunity to come and visit The Village for an hour-long session of stories and related activities (e.g., craft or music). Because each group can only visit once a year, opportunities for the children to engage deeply in the process of storytelling to lasting effect are limited. The Village wanted to find a way to allow children to engage more deeply with story, and hopefully benefit on various levels.

The Village had conducted a short series of Communities of Inquiry in a local primary school, using a traditional story as the stimulus for each inquiry. The sessions were positive experiences in which the children enjoyed thinking deeply about their own questions raised by the story. This encouraged The Village to look for ways in which to take this work further.

### The Storyteller in Schools project

After three years of looking for funding, The Village managed to secure the one-year post of Storyteller in Schools. The Storyteller was to facilitate weekly Communities of Inquiry with ten groups of children aged 9-11 in six Greater Pollok primary schools. The Storyteller was also responsible for continuously monitoring the project and writing a final report.

The job description for the post specifically asked for a professional storyteller with some experience of working with children. No experience of the Community of Inquiry method, teaching or of facilitating groups was requested. Towards the start of

the project the Storyteller underwent a two-day Level One SAPERE training course. The project made no claims to specifically 'philosophical' aims or outcomes and was grounded in the belief that a trained philosopher is not essential for participants to benefit from involvement in a Community of Inquiry.

#### Schools

Primary schools in Greater Pollok were approached with the offer of the project, and the first six who could agree to the following set of conditions were selected:

- Groups would meet weekly.
- The teacher would be present in the room as an observer, and to assist in behaviour management.
- Each group would have between 12 and 15 children (in most cases this meant the school had to arrange cover for the other half of the class).
- Teachers would keep a diary of observations and would meet with the Storyteller once a month to discuss progress.

The six schools selected provided a wide spread across the different geographic and demographic characteristics of Greater Pollok, ranging from the poorest to the most affluent areas; from a school with a high proportion of children of black and ethnic minority to schools where all the children are white; a school with a Visual Impairment Unit, and a neat split of three of the schools being Roman Catholic and the other three non-denominational. All in all, the Storyteller in Schools worked with 132 children over ten months.

#### The educational context

Despite decades of calls from educational theorists for a more rounded approach to learning (e.g., SOED 1991, Faupel 2003) the existing educational structure is still primarily concerned with meeting set targets and levels (Lucas 2005). Of the current theories and strategies to counter this, three are placed to have particular effect on Scottish education. An

**examination** of these helps us place the Storyteller in Schools project in context. These three are:

### 1. ASSESSMENT IS FOR LEARNING

Research done by Kings College London (1998) and published in the influential document 'Inside the black box' investigated how assessment can affect a child's ability to learn. It reports that children learn most effectively given the following conditions:

- Objectives of learning shared with students
- Questioning is open
- Assessment is formative – e.g. comment only
- Peer-assessment and self-assessment is encouraged

### 2. EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

The paper Education for Citizenship in Scotland (2002) states that, 'young people should be enabled to develop capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life'. The paper recommends that educational experiences should assist a child to:

- identify and frame their own questions and problems and suggest possible solutions
- respond in imaginative ways to social, moral and political dilemmas and challenges
- apply knowledge and skills gained in one context to another in order to take advantage of an opportunity, solve a problem or resolve an issue
- imagine alternatives to current ways of doing things
- manage change, dealing with risk and uncertainty in an enterprising manner
- explore and reach an understanding of their own creative abilities and of how to make best use of these.

### 3. A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

The above ideas are being formalized into the school system through a thorough Curriculum Review, which will devise one curriculum for 3-18 under the name 'A Curriculum for Excellence'. In line with the acceptance

of the importance of citizenship outlined above, this curriculum is to be based on values rather than content and is to be designed around the principles of 'challenge and enjoyment'. The new curriculum aims to empower children and young people to be:

- 'Successful learners' with 'enthusiasm and motivation for learning' and 'openness to new thinking and ideas'
- 'Confident individuals' who have 'self respect' and can 'develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world'
- 'Responsible citizens' with 'respect for others' and an ability to 'develop informed, ethical views of complex issues'
- 'Effective contributors' who can 'communicate in different ways' and 'apply critical thinking in new contexts'
- (from 'A Curriculum for Excellence')

The jury is still out on the best way(s) to achieve such aims—the first iteration of revised curriculum guidelines became due in August 2005, and there is much work to come after that. Teachers, academics and politicians will be considering a whole range of different pedagogical approaches, including the Community of Inquiry, all of which make claims to achieving some of the aims listed above.

Until the review is complete and the Curriculum for Excellence announced, which approach or approaches a school adopts to deliver these wide-ranging goals is influenced by various factors, including the stance taken by the local authority, decisions taken at a learning community level, individual school level or even by an individual teacher.

#### Aims of the storyteller in schools project

As one such approach, the Community of Inquiry fits very well with the above developments in the educational establishment. A glance at the reported benefits of regular involvement in communities of inquiry shows it to meet nearly every point raised by the citizenship and Curriculum for Excellence

agendas. This has been recognised by the Scottish Executive Education Department, which is including it for consideration as part of their Curriculum Review, and Learning and Teaching Scotland, which has scheduled it in their influential SETT conference for 2005.

Combining two methods proved to enhance communication and thinking skills, the Storyteller in Schools project also fits well with these developments.

Based upon the findings of previous research into effects of regular participation in storytelling and/or communities of inquiry, the project aimed to develop the following:

- thinking skills
- emotional intelligence
- the ability to justify one's own opinions
- self-awareness and self-confidence
- communication skills
- respect of others' views

It was hoped the benefits would be evident within regular class time and school activities as well as at home, and would help to lay foundations for a more active participation in a democratic society.

### Evaluation

The above indicators are not easily measured using methods of traditional quantitative data analysis, and the difficulties in 'reliably' evaluating interventions such as this have been well documented (see Trickey and Topping 2004).

In recognition of this, advice was sought from various academics with experience in the field as to which evaluation methods to employ. The feedback overwhelmingly favoured avoiding quantitative forms of analysis, thus acknowledging the complexity of the issues involved. Such an approach is also in line with the open and non-judgmental philosophy behind the Community of Inquiry itself (Laverty and Gregory 2004).

It was decided to use the following set of methods to monitor and evaluate the project:

- analysis of videos of sessions at three different points
- participant questionnaires and discussion
- anecdotal evidence from parents
- regular in-depth discussions with teachers
- feedback from other services
- pre- and post-intervention scores on the Emotional Literacy checklists
- ongoing observation and analysis by the storyteller

It was hoped that this cluster of methods, quantitative and qualitative, would provide a holistic picture of any changes and effects the project was having, bearing in mind that it is impossible to exclude effects from other factors given the complex nature of human behaviour (see Trickey and Topping, 2004).

## Results

### Video analysis

Sessions were filmed at three points during the year, the same story being used to aid comparison. However the occasional presence of the camera was greeted with such excitement that the sessions were atypical and the films are not a reliable record of the project (see Borg 1989, Hitchcock 1989). They were therefore not used for analysis. Had the camera been used more often the children might have become accustomed to its presence.

### Children's evaluation

Children's opinions and thoughts about the project were gathered in the following ways:

- observation of relevant discussions occurring in the Community of Inquiry
- directed discussions
- questionnaire filled in at the end of the spring term
- interviews by an independent film maker

Children were very positive about the project and considered that they had benefited in a number of ways, including:

- increased self confidence and ability to speak out
- better listening skills
- being better able to take turns
- improved thinking/imagination
- knowing each other better

### Parents' evaluations

Discussion with parents indicated children had benefited in the following ways:

- increased stating of agreement/disagreement
- increased interest in reading
- increased listening skills
- increased speaking skills
- increased questioning
- more reasonable behaviour
- increased ability to explain themselves
- better language skills

### Emotional Literacy Scores

A standardised test was used as a measure of whether children involved in the project showed significant increases in 'emotional literacy' as measured by the children, their parents and teachers and compared with children who were not involved in the project. The tests were carried out at the start and end of the project.

'Emotional literacy' refers to an individual's skills in areas such as self-awareness, emotional resilience, motivation, and handling of emotions and relationships—all areas reputedly affected by regular involvement in Communities of Inquiry. To determine whether any changes of statistical significance had occurred over the year, paired t tests were carried out on the before and after results for the two sets of data, with significance identified by a p value smaller than 0.05. Any values higher than this are deemed not significant as it is highly possible changes were due to random factors.

Emotional literacy p scores – totals  
(significant results in bold)

Variable	Experimental group p score (n=98)	Control group p score (n=33)
Pupil score	0.096	0.219
Parent total	0.022	0.145
Teacher total	0.368	0.503

These results imply that a significant increase in emotional intelligence was noted by parents of the children involved in the project (the 'experimental group') but not of the parents of the control group children. Although the other scores do not fall within the levels of significance, all the experimental group scores are below those of the control group. This pattern indicates that the emotional literacy of the children involved in the project did increase more than that of the control group children.

It should be noted that the tests use highly subjective perceptual statements as measures, and thus the results display perceived rather than actual changes in emotional literacy.

## Teacher evaluations

### Teacher observations: changes within the Community of Inquiry sessions (all schools)

Skill showing significant increase	Evidence
<b>Ability to ask questions</b>	Increased number of questions Move from 'factual' to in-depth/abstract questions
<b>Listening</b>	Great improvement in ability to remember what others had said
<b>Confidence</b>	Increased participation Increased risk taking in disagreeing with friends/ power figures
<b>Awareness of and respect for others' feelings</b>	Increased ability to state disagreement amicably Challenging others on logical rather than personal grounds Increase in dominating individuals allowing others to express themselves
<b>Thinking skills</b>	Increased ability to use reasons to back up opinions Increased ability to refer to other members' statements Increased ability to refer to knowledge gained outside sessions Increased ability to identify agreement/disagreement of ideas Increased ability to follow a line of thought through to conclusion Increased used of examples and counter examples Increase in use of original thought rather than repetition
<b>Self awareness</b>	Increased ability to change own mind
<b>Self control</b>	Reduced occurrence of interrupting others Increase in dominating individuals allowing others to express themselves
<b>Community building/trust</b>	Increased support for people being 'unfairly' treated Increased direct eye contact between group Increased willingness to talk to/sit next to member of the opposite sex Decrease in domination by a few individuals Increased occurrence of asking for and giving each other help Increase in direct communication between children, rather than via the storyteller

### Teacher observations – changes in class time (Schools Two and Four)

Group dynamics	Increased willingness to work together
Self awareness	Increase in taking responsibility for own actions Increased willingness to correct themselves
Listening	Increased ability to listen
Respect for others	Increased use of disagreement to challenge people amicably Increase in asking questions of each other Increased respect for peer's opinions
Self confidence	Quieter members of class contributing more One member stuttering less (teacher attributes it to increased confidence in speaking)
Self control	Increased patience Less calling out in class
Key individuals	Some individuals show significant improvements in language, participation, quality of reasoning

Teachers also remarked that they had found the sessions beneficial to their own understanding of the children and had changed their approach to teaching in some ways:

- increased awareness of level of children's thinking/knowledge
- increased knowledge of individuals' characters
- increased awareness of some children's intelligence
- more aware of the benefits and learning skills derived from discussion situations
- finding more opportunities for these skills to be practised within class time
- increased awareness of the importance of being 'less judgmental'
- increased understanding of the need to 'let go' of control more

These results add to the already substantial body of literature indicating that regular involvement in Communities of Inquiry can have significant positive impacts for those involved.

## Storyteller's Observations, Discussion and Recommendations

Observations from the storyteller's notes for each group are given below.

### School One

#### Storyteller's general observations

First attempts at building a Community of Inquiry were disastrous. Although the children had many questions and fascinating ideas, they struggled enormously with the rules: they found it hard to stay in their seats; interruptions were constant and great pleasure was taken in the method's encouragement of disagreeing with others, while the requirement that this disagreement be based on logical, rather than personal, grounds was ignored. It was quite a scene.

Realising that the children lacked the basic skills to even begin building a Community of Inquiry, the storyteller pulled back from the method and instead concentrated on activities that would begin to develop the foundations for Community of Inquiry work at a later date. Circle Time-style games and activities to develop communication, trust and respect were introduced, while the storyteller reduced her visits from an hour to twenty minutes. This was then used as an incentive for good behaviour. The group agreed upon a set of communal standards with which to evaluate themselves at the end of each session. Should they meet their own standards, the next session would be longer. This worked well, with the children responding to the fairness of the approach and eager for extended sessions.

After just four such sessions it was agreed that the group was ready to start to build a Community of Inquiry. However, there were to be some changes:

1. Agreed standards were set with which to evaluate group progress, to be recorded on a colourful wall chart. Strategies that would creatively engage the children, such as creative ways of voting, were used. The evaluation considered issues such as 'Did we listen well to each other? Did we show each other respect? Did we think well?' and raised much

interesting discussion itself. Having real consequences for themselves—the possible extension of the session times—the children took the process seriously.

2. A 'talking stick'—another common Circle Time feature—was introduced to formalise the need for only one person to speak at a time. It also provided a physical representation of the trust and good will being handed from person to person. Initially the storyteller brought in an item of personal value to use, as a demonstration of her trust in the group's ability to be caring and respectful. However the group decided they did not trust themselves not to damage it—significant in itself. Towards the end of the second term the group decided they no longer needed the talking stick.

Both these methods engaged the children as active participants whose actions held consequences for themselves. By midway through the second term the group was managing hour-long in-depth discussions in which they demonstrated increasing trust, respect, communication and thinking skills. All but one member became a regular contributor to the lively and good-natured sessions, enjoyed by all.

It would be wrong to imply that all issues were overcome. Whilst the group did make enormous progress on many levels which carried on beyond the sessions, one factor remained contentious: a concerted effort by a particularly vocal and influential member of the group to disagree with and attack another member, equally vocal but socially marginalised. This situation was interpreted by storyteller and teacher as the response of the hitherto undisputed 'king' of the class to finding himself in a situation where other members were allowed to express themselves, and shine. One child commented that prior to the sessions she had not known that he could be very funny. Neither had the rest of the group—and some of them didn't like the discovery.

Various attempts to discuss and overcome this problem were made, but none were very successful, some being seized as an opportunity for expressing yet more hurtful remarks. The storyteller's inexperience at facilitation was felt here, as she struggled to keep

control of the situation. Eventually the aggressor was taken aside and the issue discussed with him, after which he made commendable efforts to offer agreement and support. Interestingly, attacks from other members continued.

## School Two

### Storyteller's general observations

The two groups were very different in character and are considered separately. The P6 group (aged 9-10) was initially dominated by two individuals, seemingly determined to intimidate the other members into silence through threatening body language and eye contact. The effects of this were magnified by the small size of the group (just seven children).

To help overcome this problem four children from the P5 class were asked to join the group, an addition which transformed group dynamics. The group now began to come together, and by the end of the year was amazing the class teacher by the depth of their inquiries and the improvement in the social and thinking skills of some members.

Conversely the P7 sessions began by being lively, articulate and friendly. The challenge here was the reverse: how to persuade a group of friends, used to chatting informally with each other, to adopt rules and formalities in their exchanges.

Both groups featured an individual who persisted in making extended and rambling contributions and who would refuse to stop talking, despite the protestations and entreaties from the storyteller and their peers. One boy explicitly stated that he did so for the attention (interestingly, this child suffered from a speech impediment and rarely spoke in class). Whilst the content and complexity of the other children's thinking developed, these boys' thinking skills did not advance to the same degree. Oblivious to, or even desirous of, the groups' responses and challenges to their outspoken and illogical statements, they did not invest in constructively meeting the groups' demands of them, and thus did not progress. This was an interesting insight into the processes involved in effective thought development.

In both cases the storyteller did not deal with the situation very effectively, starting to only really emphatically challenge the children as the end of the year approached and it was clear that other methods had failed.

The teacher, enthused by the project and the benefits she could see in her own class, was eager to facilitate sessions herself and did so on the occasions the storyteller could not be present.

### School Three

#### Class information

A large minority of the class had various visual impairments. They spent much of the day with the class but also received special support and tuition from the V.I. unit on site. Two of the children with visual impairments had more complex support needs and learning disabilities, unidentified to the storyteller. All of the children with visual impairments were placed in one group for the sessions, with a roughly equal number of 'seeing' children.

#### Storyteller's general observations

Both groups developed well with time, the most noticeable differences being changes in the roles of participants: individuals who had once dominated discussion gradually took a back seat and even started to experiment with different roles (challenger, supporter, devil's advocate) for the sake of stimulating debate. This has been recognised as a higher-order skill showing a high degree of awareness of the self and the processes at work (Francis 1986) and was not as apparent with the other groups. Shy children and those initially not interested in the project became more involved ("I thought it would be boring" said one boy "but later I realised what it was about, and that it wasn't."), while some remarkable gains in thinking ability seemed to occur. Children who could hardly remember what others had said at the start of the project going on to be able to creatively challenge and build upon others' thoughts.

Although the teacher seemed of the opinion that the children gained little or no benefit from the project

the children held a different view. Pupil feedback was very positive, as was the case in all the schools, with the children feeling they had made considerable progress in many areas, often stating they would not have done so otherwise. In the final meeting of the second group the children talked in depth about the differences they were aware of between the Community of Inquiry sessions and normal class time, and how this affected them. Consensus seemed to exist on the following points:

- They described the storyteller's method of placing their interests as central, allowing them to choose topics for discussion, as vitally important, resulting in sessions they actually cared about and were interested in. They claimed they learned much more as a result.
- They were able to share their ideas and knowledge with each other.
- While they recognised that the class involved learning, it was fun!

These comments reveal the sophisticated nature of the children's awareness of their role in learning and the processes affecting them.

The second group struggled with one member deliberately disagreeing and attacking another individual, supported in this by several other children. Again, different methods were used to try to work through the problem, but it was never entirely laid to rest. A further issue was the presence of the two children with learning disabilities, or rather the storyteller's ignorance of the nature of their needs and a lack of support to integrate them into the group. As a result the two remained in the group throughout the year, but rarely if ever contributed appropriately.

#### School Four

##### Storyteller's general observations

Both groups began enthusiastically and developed well, initially featuring a number of highly articulate members and a positive feeling between the children and going on to develop increased sensitivity

to each other and a dramatic increase in the participation and thinking skills of some members. The children were very keen on the sessions and a very strong rapport built up between the storyteller and the class, helped by the commitment and support of the class teacher.

Interestingly all the children from ethnic minority backgrounds were reluctant to speak at first, some not venturing a word until the second term. However this reluctance to speak diminished with time, although none of them reached a level of articulation to match some of the other children. Several boys who were initially resistant to the project and expressed this through flippant remarks and behaviour quickly became engaged at a serious level, possibly due to the high level of commitment from their peers.

The class expressed an interest in telling the stories themselves, which they took turns to do in the final term. With this new development the children really did have a high degree of autonomy over the sessions. They were the storytellers, the questioners, the question pickers and the talkers. The storyteller herself rarely intervened. Interestingly, this class was the least keen on choosing the next speaker themselves, their initial feeling of meaningful control possibly being greater than other groups.

The teacher, whose own methods and approach were in line with the ethos of the Community of Inquiry, referred to and used some of the techniques in his own class time. The storyteller was made to feel a welcome and valued part of the school, and levels of engagement and commitment to the process were correspondingly very high.

### School Five

#### Storyteller's general observations

In the words of the class teacher, 'it was like pulling teeth at the beginning!' The group was composed of children who were struggling academically, particularly with reading and writing, and whom the head teacher had thought would benefit from the verbal nature of the Community of Inquiry.

Self-confidence was painfully lacking, children found it very difficult to formulate questions or respond to others' statements, even to the direct questions asked by the storyteller in an attempt to increase participation. Only two individuals were initially willing to speak out, questions were factual and discussions conjectural: 'How old was she?' 'What colour was her dress?' 'How old was he?' 'What was the cat's name?' The storyteller found it very hard to support the children in a move to a higher level of thinking.

Different approaches were tried to help build a Community of Inquiry from the reticent individuals gathered in the room:

- Various ways of engaging with questions: Modeling and discussing different kinds of questions, exploring the motives behind questioning, using word cards as prompts for constructing different kinds of questions, asking the children to think about the themes of the story and then ask questions of interest concerning these.
- Paired and small group work: Children were asked to think of and discuss questions in pairs or small groups before reporting back to the community, this possibly being less unnerving. This was of limited success initially, as members remained reluctant to speak to their neighbours, although in some cases children who rarely or never contributed to the group were seen to actively participate in smaller groups, though reverting to shyness in the whole-group setting. This strategy became more successful as time went on and the group became more trusting of each other.
- Changing seating arrangements: Certain children had strong preferences for who they sat beside, not always to the benefit of group dynamics. It was observed how one dominant girl would call for a very quiet girl to sit beside

her, and how on an occasion when the dominant girl was absent the quiet child started to speak. Subsequent moves to separate the girls resulted in the quiet girl becoming more and more outspoken, while the dominant child got better and better at controlling her input and allowing others to contribute.

- **Targets:** Towards the end of the first term children were asked to consider in what ways they would like to alter their contributions to the sessions and to write these down. These were then individually printed onto special cards which were regularly brought to the sessions for the children to re-consider. Discussion was encouraged but, following the ethos of the Community of Inquiry, no-one was compelled to discuss their targets.
- **Ways to limit participation:** On two occasions playing cards were distributed equally amongst the children. Each time a child spoke, she or he had to place a card in the centre, thereby limiting the total number of possible contributions. The method failed on both occasions, the dominant children quickly running out of cards and the others sitting silently around the table, playing with theirs.

By the end of the year the group had matured into a committed Community of Inquiry engaging in in-depth discussions on topics and at levels 'that would not have been misplaced with adults' (teacher's remark). Although two members remained nearly silent to the end, the overall improvement was dramatic. Some of this development can be attributed to the increase in group familiarity and facilitator experience that occurred with time; some may be attributable to concrete attempts at engaging the children.

Non-linear progress

The process of this development followed a fascinating non-linear progression: often a 'good' week would be followed by a near-silent session. Around halfway through the year the group seemed to undergo a critical period of liberation in which they found their voices and opinions, and such was the excitement that all self-control vanished and calls to stick to the rules were futile. But this seemed like a crucial stage on the journey. Having gone so far in one direction, it was now possible to refine these skills to build a Community of Inquiry together. Prior to this raucous breakthrough the rules and form of the Community of Inquiry were largely irrelevant: a group of silent children may be interpreted as being 'well behaved', but considering them to be thoughtful or creative thinkers is a harder conclusion to reach.

### Questioning

It was always stated at the beginning of every session in the project that the children were welcome to ask any questions that the story brought to mind. Some groups took several months to understand the significance of this; others rarely if ever explored beyond basic plot and character. In some ways this was not a problem as the discussions would often delve into the assumed meanings inherent in the question—e.g., a question such as 'What was his name?' might lead on to a discussion about the significance of names; a question about the colour of a character's clothes would lead to an inquiry about appearances. However, in nearly all cases the children seemed incapable of taking these experiences and realising that they could ask direct questions about these issues. The storyteller tried various ways of highlighting this, but questions remained on a fairly basic level with all groups.

The Community of Inquiry emphasises both encouraging 'philosophical' questions and allowing the children to talk about their own choice of topic. After some time the storyteller stopped trying to negotiate more philosophically-themed questions and chose instead to be happy with the level of questioning, leading as they nearly always did to fascinating and detailed discussion.

## School Six

### Storyteller's general observations

This school — and one group in particular — remained the most challenging school in the project. One of the groups had three particular boys with severely challenging behaviour, which had a knock-on effect for the whole group (and the class as a whole, the class being known for being particularly unsettled). The storyteller at first attempted to retain control whilst adhering to the participative and open ethos of the Community of Inquiry; however it became clear that simply asking the children to follow rules they had no interest in or respect for was not an effective strategy! The class teacher's presence was used as a controlling element, with children being asked to sit beside her or leave the group if necessary.

After a discussion between the class teacher and storyteller at the end of the first term, where both agreed that the current situation was unsustainable, a medley of new approaches was introduced for the new year:

- Change the composition of the groups
- Change the physical setting: Two tables were set up, one for the community and another for any member to voluntarily go to should they decide, for whatever reason, to leave the group. On this table were paper, pencils and books, and at it sat the teacher. Whilst children were asked to make the decision themselves to go, especially if they thought their presence would disturb the others, it was also made clear that they could be sent there by the storyteller. Their re-joining of the community was on condition they would keep to the rules.
- Targets: At the first session of the January term, children were presented with a short work sheet called 'New Year! New Stories!'. This asked them to consider what their new year's resolutions for the session would be (this method being used with all the schools). There

was space on the sheet for them to draw a graph representing their progress in achieving their targets and the sheets were revisited periodically.

- Length of session: The sessions were reduced from one hour to forty minutes. This proved problematic as it did not allow much time for the discussion.
- Points: The school had a points system in place whereby points were awarded to the best groups. This system was carried over into the sessions, both providing an incentive for good behaviour and making a connection between the session and the rest of school. It gave the message that this was no easy 'time out' and what happened here mattered as much as the rest of the school week.
- Group evaluation: A set of rules and standards was agreed upon and evaluated at the end of each session, similar to School One. This was discontinued after some time as it was felt that the amount of time the process took was too long given the reduced session length.
- A different approach to 'bad' behaviour: The storyteller's initial attempts to control the group, and particular children especially, did not work. Calling out, rude remarks, playing around, deliberately annoying and occasionally physically abusing other members continued. Having started with a 'soft' approach, the storyteller tried using more severe reprimands, which of course was the wrong way round and failed. She decided to change her approach from one of reprimand to one of compassion, moving away from the implied notion that these were 'bad' children, and instead realising that they were in special need of love and kindness. In effect she was modeling the kind of respect and behaviour towards others she

was asking of them. This approach was much more successful, working at a human level rather than resorting to imposed hierarchy. A reassuring hand on an arm of an excited child, or responding with humour and amusement, proved much more effective than had sharp words or reminders of the rules. The rules remained, as did an insistence on them being kept, but efforts were made to provide an atmosphere that would allow the group to want to do so.

- Child choice of next speaker: One of the most important developments of the project was suggested by one of the 'bad' boys: "Why can't we choose who goes next?" The storyteller agreed to give it a try, and the results were remarkable. Immediately the group's commitment to the activity changed, as they now felt ownership of the sessions. The approach was trialled with the other groups, becoming a near-permanent feature of the sessions. The storyteller retained the right to intervene, especially where clear biases were at play. There was a clear reluctance across most groups to pick someone of the opposite sex; some 'unpopular' children were rarely picked; some children took whole minutes in making their choice. It was usually enough for the storyteller to ask "Can you please pick someone who hasn't spoken yet", or similar, and the children would respond. Any negative effect to the quality of discussion was not evident.

### Progress

In the eyes of the storyteller, both groups developed enormously in regards to social and communication skills. One child remarked with wonder that "no-one has been sent to the table for two weeks"—truly an event worth noting, reflecting massive gains in group self-control, involvement and ownership of the inquiry process. This group made

progress on all levels, more so with the social elements than the cognitive skills.

The class teacher and head teacher, however, were concerned about the progress of the project. They had been told to expect certain benefits and could see no evidence of them; however they had also been told that the process would take a long time. The problems experienced with the first group also affected their ability to see the successful progression made by the second group. The school was in a difficult position—asked to have faith in a method they believed to be having few, if not detrimental effects (the class teachers were giving up a precious two hours of class time to be with the storyteller). Eventually it was agreed that the sessions would cease earlier than planned, but only by a few weeks.

Discussion - Issues particular to this project

Storyteller-staff relations: a difficult relationship

Due to the way the project was set up, the position of the storyteller in relation to the children was always ambiguous; not a teacher herself, and needing the presence of a teacher in the sessions for insurance purposes, on a first-name basis with the children and introduced to the children not as a facilitator but as 'the storyteller', she was not a figure of authority. As a member of auxiliary staff she remained unfamiliar with the norms and idiosyncrasies of each school, making it difficult for her to know the appropriate ways to discipline and control the groups, while she herself felt committed to treating the children with respect and—as the Community of Inquiry demands—as equals.

The teachers were also placed in a difficult position: asked to become silent observers in their own class and yet also to help with behaviour management. Both adults were cautious of infringing on each other's terrain, possibly resulting in a hole in the middle where no one had authority. The situation was different in every school, with some relationships working very well and the two adults successfully reinforcing each other. The best results came from schools where the teachers were committed to the project throughout each school day.

Fundamental differences of philosophy, aims and interpretations between the different stakeholders

The project had aimed to help develop children's skills on a whole range of levels: thinking skills, emotional intelligence and communication skills, and social skills. The different groups, starting from different points and containing different individuals, benefited differently.

Developments in School Six raised the issue of fundamental differences in philosophy between the school system and the storyteller. The storyteller, not a teacher herself, used methods that encouraged participation, enjoyment and engagement, sometimes encouraging interaction that went beyond so-called 'good' behaviour. It should be noted that such an approach was informed by her beliefs, personality and skills (including the use of clowning) rather than being inherent to the Community of Inquiry approach. However, for the purposes of this project the two—storyteller and the Community of Inquiry—were intimately connected.

Many of these issues arose because the facilitator came from outside the school system. Most classroom Communities of Inquiry are facilitated by a school teacher with personal commitment to the method, and thus have a distinctly different flavour. Yet the storyteller's more radical approach is not wholly foreign to the ethos of the Community of Inquiry, a method developed to counteract the unchallenging nature of schools. The storyteller might on occasion have been felt to challenge the very basis that schools stand for; but perhaps that is exactly what the Community of Inquiry does.

Broader issues for discussion

#### Training

Some practitioners of the Philosophy for Children method (who insist that trained philosophers are necessary to effectively facilitate a Community of Inquiry) would criticise the project for promoting a less-than-rigorous approach to the Community of Inquiry that underplays the method's main aim: the 'progress towards truth' (Gardner 1996, p. 15).

There is also debate over whether formal training is necessary to successfully facilitate a session, but surely this depends on how one judges success. A group of children who have made enormous progress in the way they relate to each other, in their ability to listen to and respond with thought and respect to others and in shedding their shyness, can be argued to have had real benefits from the community, regardless of whether the facilitator was a trained philosopher, a teacher with Level 1 SAPERE training, or a lay storyteller. Gardner (1996) believes observing sessions can not lead to an understanding of how to facilitate, for the art of a truly skilled facilitator may be so subtle that an observer is completely unaware of the methods being used. This can lead to the opposite assumption, that facilitation is easy.

The storyteller was not a skilled facilitator. As described here, there were several issues for which she struggled to find effective solutions. However the benefits for the children involved were very real, and in many cases did include noticeable improvements in thinking skills. The high level of results from groups practising without philosophically-trained facilitators is significant and should be acknowledged by proponents of the Philosophy for Children approach.

### Terms of reference

In a School One session, following a particularly acrimonious discussion, the children were asked to think and talk about what the terms 'community' and 'inquiry' meant to them. The Community came round to considering 'trust' and what a trusting community would be like. The response was highly illuminating, if tragic: a trusting community would be characterised by CCTV cameras everywhere, so everyone knew what everyone was doing and thus would be safe.

This is a sad but necessary reminder of how different the terms of reference between adult and children, and the children themselves, may be. We all come to the community with different experiences. That is one of its ultimate strengths. But assumptions need to be broken down on all levels for effective inquiry. The facilitator may repeat at the start of each

session that the Community of Inquiry is about trust and respect, but do the children understand what is being implied by their words? Some children have never been trusted, and as a result trust no-one, not even themselves. All we can do is show them, through our actions, what trust is.

### Realistic expectations

Today's classrooms, and the children within them, suffer from a variety of problems that require serious and committed efforts to work through them. Any personal or social issue that raises its head in the classroom, such as bullying, attention disorders or abuse, is likely to do so in the Community of Inquiry. We are talking about the same children after all.

Existing literature on the method massively downplays the problems that can arise when introducing a group to the Community of Inquiry. It is unrealistic and even irresponsible to make the simple claim, as made by some proponents of the method, that children love Communities of Inquiry and respond to it enthusiastically and with ease. This is misleading. Instead, we must accept just how challenging and difficult the process can be for both children and facilitator, and that certain prerequisites are necessary to succeed. Preliminary work to establish these skills may be necessary. In recognition of this, Clackmannanshire authority is preparing a set of preliminary resources for secondary school teachers to use before attempting to build a Community of Inquiry.

Also relevant are the cultural norms and expectations of the members. It is perhaps not fair to expect a group of ten-year-olds from a deprived area of Glasgow—some from families where argument and abuse is the main form of communication, from communities where society is structured along adversarial and territorial lines, in schools where the only respect is that demanded by the teacher—to have the ability or desire to sit quietly in a circle, calmly listening to and evaluating their peers' remarks and offering constructive criticism. Glasgow's is a 'banter' culture—interrupting each other with emphatic

remarks is an accepted form of communication. The Community of Inquiry effectively asks these children to change in ways that go against everything they know. We must acknowledge this and have expectations and methods to match.

### The necessity of longevity

"If you stopped it right now, I don't think it would make a tremendous difference to life outside – it's not going to change much about them, because I think they would revert back and forget about it. But if this kind of approach was started earlier on, carried on through, then I think the approach would completely change many, many things. I think by the time they came up to us (P5) we would be really moving them on . . . to real higher order skills. . . But I think if it wasn't maintained and reinforced then they would lose some of that." School Four teacher

The way the Storyteller in Schools project was set up made it inherently unsustainable: it was dependent on the presence of an external facilitator and did not include a training element for the teachers involved. For lasting effect, interventions such as this must be introduced in a sustainable manner with a view to providing the children with the opportunity to continue developing the skills. In group Three A's final session of the project, a boy asked the question: "How did we like blossom through the year?" In the ensuing discussion the children contemplated what would happen to their skills without regular Communities of Inquiry. The same boy asked another poignant question: "Will the flowers die?"

### Is not forcing children to speak really 'democratic'?

One of the major claims Lipman made in support of his method was that the critical thinking skills developed through participation in a Community of Inquiry are internalised by the members, resulting in more thoughtful individuals. Psychological theories about the ultimately social origin of all thought processes support this (e.g., Vygotsky 1981). Given that opportunities for meaningful communication both between children and with adults are low in our

society, exposure to such important formative experiences is surely needed now more than ever.

In attempting to be democratic and respectful, the Community of Inquiry approach does not demand that all participants contribute verbally to the discussion. Research indicates that, over time, quiet participants will gradually become more and more involved, and this certainly proved the case with most of the groups in this project. However, by the last session of the year, there were still a number of children who had contributed only very occasionally, and had been supported in this choice by the storyteller whilst being reassured that their contribution would always be welcome. Such support contrasts with a more traditional approach to quiet students taken by teachers, which might include direct questioning with a demand that an adequate response is given.

During Group Five's last session the storyteller made gentle entreaties to the quiet members of the group that this would be their last chance to contribute. On hearing this, the teacher decided to intervene with a forceful demand that certain members make comments. The children then did what they had refused to do all year—publicly stating their opinions for the benefit of the group.

In a work detailing his use of the method with secondary-school pupils, Smillie states that the "Community of Inquiry is a democratic process which acknowledges the right of mature participants to remain silent or to make a verbal contribution. In either case participants can expect to be treated with dignity and respect" (2003, p. 32). However, this experience raised the issue of whether such an approach really is in the best interests of younger, less mature children. Is it simply a matter of time? Rather than respecting a choice not to speak, the facilitator may be unwillingly allowing the persistence of a perceived inability to speak. It may be more in line with the philosophy of the Community of Inquiry to encourage participation more forcefully, giving the children the opportunity to develop confidence in their

speaking ability and reach a position from which they can choose whether or not to speak.

#### 'Everybody has thoughts'

Feedback from the children indicates that reluctance to speak may not be caused by a lack of confidence in expressing thought; it may be due to a lack of cogent thoughts to express. This is not commonly recognised by teachers, as expressed in the School Two teacher's attempt to encourage a quiet member of the class: 'Everybody has thoughts—come on, tell us what your thoughts are.' This teacher had failed to recognise that the problem may be other than a lack of confidence and that everyone's ability to 'have thoughts' differs vastly.

An illuminating insight into this was given by a School Four boy when asked why he had suddenly started to contribute to discussions after several months: 'I'm having more thoughts than before. Now thoughts just pop in my head. But before I didn't have any.' He stated that it was the Community of Inquiry that had brought about this change. A powerful tool indeed!

#### Conclusion

Listening to a story is a wonderful way to pass the time. All but one of the 132 children in the Storyteller in Schools project claimed to enjoy their weekly storytelling session. Children said the stories were 'fun', 'exciting', 'relaxing', 'helps your imagination' and 'make you think a lot'. Yet as professionals concerned with the education of children, it is 'the quality of thinking that should concern us' (Fisher 1996, p. 10). Traditional comprehension exercises and even class 'discussions' call upon significantly different mental processes than those used when inquiring into a character or author's motives, or drawing a theme from the narrative and following it by questions that go beyond the confines of plot and character, as occurs in a Community of Inquiry.

The six primary schools involved in the Storyteller in Schools project were largely characterised by committed teachers who had access to a range of methods and specially developed

interventions to engage their classes in active and enjoyable thinking. In addition the schools had good IT equipment allowing for 'interactive' methods. Yet somehow the critical thinking skills of the majority of pupils remained dormant, or only partially stimulated. It was as if in the midst of the bigger efforts to help them 'achieve', 'build characters' and 'reach for the stars' (mottos displayed on notice boards in some of the schools) the educational establishment has forgotten to take into account the basics of what it means to be human.

Humans are social animals. Like all animals, we learn from others of our species. We humans are distinct from other animals in our rational thought, our use of language to communicate and our capability for self-awareness. However these innate abilities will only develop to the extent that we are capable of observing and learning them from others of our kind. If as children we are involved in open discussion, treated as equals, asked our opinions and why we hold them, encouraged to share our thoughts to the benefit of others and made to understand that it is alright to disagree with someone, then we will ourselves develop these abilities and take them forward into our lives. Equally, if we are commended for simply recalling facts and reprimanded for approaching a problem from a novel direction, then we will quickly learn which mental processes our society values and develop these accordingly. Aspects of our higher, more critical and creative thinking skills will remain undeveloped.

The kind of thinking valued by our school system was made clear by a head teacher's comments after observing one of the storytelling sessions. In this instance the storyteller had been particularly impressed by the depth of the community's thinking, going beyond the usual factual questions and delving into complex issues of motive. Yet, rather than appreciating the complexity of the question at hand, the head teacher interpreted the question at the most basic level possible—as a comprehension question whose answer lay in a simple recall of fact from the story. She expressed her surprise at the poor level of engagement the children must have had with the

story. Could they really not remember why the character had acted in such a way? After all, the answer was so simple, if only they had listened... End of story.

If only she had listened. Stories should never end. The closing of a book or the speaking of those memorable final words should signal a beginning of questions and thoughts that link up different previously held ideas and challenge prior knowledge. Unfortunately this head teacher saw only a simple question to which there was a simple answer, right or wrong. Such is the tragedy of our education system; and such is our need for approaches such as the Community of Inquiry.

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## Reason, feminism and philosophical education

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Many feminist philosophers have formulated arguments as to how the construction and use of reason and rationality, especially in the Western philosophical tradition, has silenced, in particular, women's voices. Some writers, such as Luce Irigaray (1985), have suggested that women develop their own discourse and ignore philosophical tradition, whereas others, for example Genevieve Lloyd (1984), contend that this tradition must be confronted. Recently, these concerns have been voiced by feminist philosophers who have been addressing the connections between feminism and the philosophy for children. Terri Field (1995) expresses her concern that traditional philosophy with its established dichotomies (e.g., mind/body, reason/emotion, masculinity/femininity, subjectivity/objectivity) devalues and excludes the somatic, affective and imaginative from philosophical investigation and constructs practical barriers for women to partake in such activity. She uses a feminist critique of reason to assess philosophy for children and its goals of reasonableness.<sup>1</sup> San MacColl (1994, p. 5) asks 'would you wish on women or small girls a practice of philosophy which you yourself have come to

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<sup>1</sup> Field (1997) notes a general lack of feminist analysis of philosophy for children. In response to this apparent lack of material, *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* has devoted a double issue, Vol.11, Nos.3&4 (1994) and a single issue, Vol.13, No.1 (1997), to the theme of Women, Feminism and Philosophy for Children.

see as deeply imbued with disguised, gendered ideals and associations?' MacColl's question expresses well the concerns of feminists interested in the philosophical education of children. This paper looks at some of the criticisms by feminist philosophers of traditional Western epistemology and how this may impact on philosophy for children.<sup>2</sup>

#### Philosophy as a rational discourse

A great deal of the philosophy for children literature assumes that the benefits of the classroom Community of Inquiry, e.g., the valuing of personal experience and others' opinions, the development of care, trust and tolerance, accountability, and self-correction, feature in philosophical inquiry generally. Many feminists, however, would disagree. For example, Janice Moulton (1983) criticises the aggressiveness of a method of philosophical inquiry she calls the 'Adversary Method'.<sup>3</sup> This method, she suggests, may well be 'part of the larger paradigm that distinguishes reason from emotion, and segregates philosophy from literature, aligning it with science...' (p.163). A feature of this method is that the parties involved in philosophical discussion endeavour to justify (defend) their own thesis (argument), and question (attack) or refute (put a hole in) the other party's (their opponent's) thesis, by reasoned (i.e., rational) means, using established standards of evaluation (e.g., logic). The most common approach is to pose hypothetical counterexamples whereby 'one needs to abstract the essential features of the problem' (p.159) and construct an analogy that can 'be considered dispassionately apart from the issue

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<sup>2</sup> Note that concern over philosophy's relevance to education is not restricted to feminist critiques. Edward de Bono (1994), too, has expressed concern over philosophy as a way of thinking in education. He argues that philosophy is flawed as it places too much emphasis on critical thinking to the neglect of creative thinking. In this sense much of what he says is reflected in feminist literature on philosophy as an adversarial method. For a critique and extended version of the arguments presented here see Burgh, Field & Freakley (2006), Ch.2: 'Philosophy and its Critics'.

<sup>3</sup> Moulton refers to this method as 'a paradigm or part of a paradigm in philosophy' (p.152, emphasis mine). See also Sherwin (1989) who tends to see it as the paradigm in philosophy, albeit 'the result of abuses of a rational approach by misogynist philosophers' (p.32).

in question' (p.159). The need to take on such a role in philosophical discussions is seen to be particularly restrictive to women, who often perceive aggression negatively.

The philosophical literature abounds with examples of the absurd levels this adversarial process sometimes manages to achieve. Field (1997) cites as a good example the abortion debate,

... where pregnancy has been analogized to a 'famous, unconscious violinist plugged into your body without your permission' (Thomson, 1971), and the foetus analogized to 'an unborn kitten' or 'a parasite' (Toohey, 1972), in order to argue for either the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of terminating the pregnancy. (pp. 20-1)

As Susan Sherwin (1989, p. 28) has noted, in such an enterprise the logic of the argument is more important 'than the usefulness of the insights to other questions'. This does not mean that hypothetical counterexamples and analogies are never constructive or that they lack any practical application. The point stressed by Sherwin is that in certain cases the complexity of the issue precludes it from being reducible to analogies. It is important, as Moulton (1983, p. 161) explains, to 'consider how the reasoning relates to a larger system of ideas'.

Feminist criticisms of Western epistemology are by no means limited to methods of philosophical inquiry. Many feminists have drawn attention to the role of reason in Western philosophical discourse and in particular to how reason has been privileged as a philosophical ideal. Lloyd (1984) constructs an understanding of how reason has become associated with man and conversely how woman has been defined by exclusion from reason. Our notions of femaleness/femininity revolve around whatever is not reason, thus privileging maleness/masculinity as the norm, along with the type of reason associated with this norm. Lloyd identifies this type of reason as 'Reason' (upper case R) in order to remind us that reason as we know it (i.e., Reason) is, in fact, narrowly

defined. According to this definition, Reason is the general human capacity for truth-seeking and problem-solving which yields results that are intellectually trustworthy. This definition of Reason is differentiated from other types of reason which have tended to be erased from traditional Western epistemology on the grounds that they do not lend themselves to rational assessment and are therefore insufficient for arriving at knowledge. Put another way, Reason does not have a place for emotion or subjectivity.

The abstraction of the reasoning processes from sensations means that they are somewhat separated from the functioning of the body as a whole. Thus, a person who exhibits the cognitive capacity for being rational but who continually violates the principles of rational assessment, that is, one who acts contrary to the dictates of Reason, is said to be irrational. In the same way, a rational agent who adopts a belief on the basis of inappropriate reasons supports an irrational belief, unless that belief is of the non-rational kind, that is, pertaining to matters of taste and no reasons are required. In terms of our present discussion Lloyd's findings have bearings on the practice of women doing philosophy. If the nature of femaleness, woman or femininity, and thus one's very identity as a woman, does not allow access to Reason (the dominant paradigm in philosophy), it follows that one cannot be a woman and philosopher at the same time. A woman must transcend her femaleness in order to philosophise. This is, indeed, what Simone de Beauvoir advanced in *The Second Sex* (1988).

#### Woman as Other

In her detailed study of women's lives de Beauvoir found that woman has been idealised into a being that is defined in relation to man. When the terms are reversed, i.e., how man functions in relation to woman, she found that the equation did not hold. De Beauvoir referred to this situation of women as having the position of 'Other', while men hold the privileged position of 'Subject'. An obvious example of the Subject/Other relationship between men and women can be found in Sigmund Freud's work on female sexuality. Freud took male

sexuality to be the norm and therefore viewed women's sexuality as a lack in comparison to the standard of male sexuality. Men held the position of (sexual) Subject which defined women's position as (sexual) Other. Moira Gatens (1996) concurs with Lloyd and de Beauvoir. She describes Freud's position as taking women's and men's biology as unproblematic, i.e., the ovum as passive, the sperm as active. The problem for Freud was that he saw the psychology of masculinity and femininity in the same way as this biology, i.e., the penis actively penetrates the passive vagina. Gatens argues that

(t)his understanding of heterosexuality is implicated in an imaginary anatomy, where the vagina is conceived of as a 'hole', a 'lack' and the penis as a 'phallus'. One could just as well, given a different relational mode between men and women, conceive of the penis as being enveloped or 'embraced' by the active vagina. (p.13)

In support of her conjecture Gatens cites biological research which suggests that the ovum might not be as passive as past research has claimed. It is thought that the ovum rejects some sperm allowing entry or enveloping of the sperm of its choice.

De Beauvoir (1988) claims that girls are unaware of themselves as Other until they start to be reprimanded for playing certain games that boys play. As girls begin to experience puberty they become aware that their bodies are somehow different, meant for particular tasks in life, and closer to nature. During menstruation a 'woman feels her body most painfully as an obscure and alien thing' (p. 62). At this point de Beauvoir maintains that in order to liberate themselves from the position of Other women must transcend their bodily 'prisons' and aspire to the more valued (i.e., masculine) goals that privilege mind over body, e.g., philosophy. Some critics argue that by describing women's bodies as closer to nature, restrictive and alien to themselves, de Beauvoir is retelling women's lives through masculine perspectives and values. Whatever the differing views are on de Beauvoir's work, her attention to the Subject/Other

distinction has been crucial to the development of feminist analysis of women's oppression in many areas. Moreover, teachers can employ her analysis to understand the gender relations in their own classrooms.<sup>4</sup>

Other writers, including Alison Jaggar (1989), have shown how the 'defence strategies' operating in philosophical discourse have excluded or devalued other voices, forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. Jaggar writes about the typical contrast of rational with emotional and how they are associated with other dichotomies or dualisms within Western theories of knowledge. She shows how emotion has been viewed with suspicion and even hostility, and is seen as distorting or impeding knowledge or observation. Emotions, she argues, are incompatible with dominant values and perceptions, and often associated with 'feminine' emotions, e.g., women's anger at their own subordination. She calls these emotions 'outlaw' emotions. Although they are considered negatively by the dominant group, Jaggar insists that they can be positive by providing the impetus and desire to take an active political stance.

Irigaray (1985) questions the sense of women trying to gain access into philosophy when it has been so oppressive to them. She suggests that women should develop their own discourse rather than try to gain access into what she describes as the male discipline of philosophy. Irigaray calls for the overthrow and disruption of philosophy as it is philosophical discourse which determines the law for all other discourses. Indeed, as Elizabeth Grosz (1989) points out, if we agree with Irigaray then it is not possible to 'insert' or add femininity into 'existing discursive frameworks as there is no space for such additions' (p. 126). Instead, there is the need to explore different kinds of discourse, different ways of knowing,

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<sup>4</sup> See Jordan, Field & Burgh (1993). One of the aims of this article is to show how de Beauvoir's ideas, and that of other feminists, can enrich the discipline of philosophy, and hence, the practice of philosophy for children. Sharan Jordan, then a teacher at Woodridge North State School, Queensland, illustrates the relevance of de Beauvoir's analysis in a classroom incident involving children's toys.

new methods and the use of language because patriarchy does not stop women from speaking. It simply refuses to listen to them unless they speak in the 'universal' way, which just happens to be as men (p. 50).

Is philosophy necessarily adversarial?

What these arguments show is that for women doing philosophy the introduction of philosophical inquiry into schools can be of some concern. The possibility of reproducing traditional methods of doing philosophy, and what is considered by many feminists to be the exclusive male perspective of knowledge and the world, obviously has serious implications from some feminist perspectives. However, MacColl (1993) explains that philosophy does not have to be that way. Philosophy for children shows a positive direction in respect to participation, relatedness and relevance to those involved. A review of the literature on philosophy for children reveals that this position has some support. For example, Laurance Splitter (1991) specifically argues against intellectual 'nit-picking', whereby one spends their time 'carping at other people's arguments'. He stresses that 'this kind of characterisation leaves out the productive or constructive dimension of critical thinking which is ultimately of great significance' (p. 90). Lipman (1991) directly cites Moulton regarding her argument against the Adversary Method, in the context of support for his view of a Community of Inquiry (p. 257). This suggests that he certainly does not identify his position and, by implication, his views on philosophical classroom discussion with the type of philosophical inquiry she is criticising.<sup>5</sup> To attest this further, he maintains that

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<sup>5</sup> It is also interesting to find references throughout the philosophy for children literature, as well as in some feminist work, regarding Socrates' dialogical method. The 'Socratic virtues' have often been mentioned favourably in the literature. Sherwin (1989, p.26) suggests that 'perhaps the Socratic model of reasoning from the particular to the general is more suitable for women'. Moulton (1983, pp.156-7) also suggests that the Socratic Method has been confused, in philosophy, with the Adversary Method, when in fact Socrates' aim was 'to show people how to think for themselves' rather than destroy the other person's argument. This reflects philosophy for children's emphasis on teaching children 'to think for themselves'.

the Community of Inquiry 'intermixes the critical concern with justice and the creative impulse towards caring. It produces respect for both principles and persons and thereby provides a model of democracy as inquiry' (p. 254).

It is perhaps favourable that most students attending schools around Australia have not as yet been formally introduced to either classical or contemporary philosophical texts. This is not to say, however, that the views of both children and adults on the role of women in society or the nature of the feminine (or other fundamental beliefs/values underlying Western discourse) have not been influenced by the likes of Plato or Aristotle as well as contemporary philosophers. Nonetheless, Reason (in Lloyd's sense) has not totally replaced other ways of knowing in classroom discussion. Children often appeal to emotions/intuition as a legitimate reason for having a belief. One of the central arguments for the effectiveness of classroom philosophy is that it takes students' personal experiences into consideration. This is accommodated through the use of narratives and engagement in dialogue. That is to say, students raise issues from their own experiences.

Because children and adolescents acquire values and knowledge of the world partly through the education system, they quickly learn what is acceptable and what is supposedly unworthy or impermissible. However, due to the nature of philosophy as a Community of Inquiry, when students expresses their opinions, as inquirers they can explore the basis of the issues discussed and possibly develop several alternative perspectives on the same issue. Admittedly, it is an empirical matter how the community of inquiry operates in different classrooms, and no doubt there will be variations according to the participants involved, the teacher's capabilities as a facilitator, and the influence of the philosophy for children 'trainers' on the teacher's style and methods. Nevertheless, the pedagogy of the Community of Inquiry leaves more room for students to explore their own thoughts and feelings.

Philosophical inquiry is a means which can be utilised to redefine and explore alternative understandings in the classroom. Children and adolescents are still learning about the values and expectations of their peers, social groups and communities, and society at large. By providing them with an opportunity to explore through shared, cooperative dialogue, students, both male and female, become aware of each other as persons. That is to say, philosophical classroom practice can allow for the recognition of their fellow inquirers as legitimate 'Others'. Although the focus is usually on verbal or so-called Socratic dialogue, different media such as art, music, dance, drama, games, sport, or simple exercises can be incorporated. The collaboration of reason and feeling (i.e., the idea of experience and the experience in itself), as a way of acquiring knowledge, is invaluable especially in relation to ethical understanding, for it enhances our ability to relate to the world.<sup>6</sup>

By allowing students to express themselves in the ways just described they become aware that there is no privileged domain where philosophy can or should take place.<sup>7</sup> Reasoning is no longer just a cognitive (or as some might claim 'disembodied') process whereby ideas of experiences are examined and experiences in themselves ignored. Activities that create opportunities for children and adolescents to understand through their own experiences of their bodies enhance their capacity to relate to, and participate in, the world in different and constructive ways that otherwise may not have been available to them. To couch what I have just said in terms that would satisfy de Beauvoir, children may come to recognise that they have an interesting understanding

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<sup>6</sup> See Redshaw (1994).

<sup>7</sup> It is a point of contention among some philosophers as to whether reasoning can be expressed through different media, and if so, whether it is, or is not, philosophy. It is sometimes asserted that art becomes/is philosophy and vice versa. For example, in *Art as Experience* (1934) Dewey claimed that it is '[t]o aesthetic experience ... the philosopher must go to understand what experience is. For philosophy like art moves in the medium of the imaginative mind, and ... art is the most direct and complete manifestation there is of experience as experience...' (p. 274).

of Other. After all, children could very well be the Other in relation to adults.

### Conclusion

By exploring and refining appropriate mediums in which the philosophical education of children can be delivered in different contexts, and by developing effective pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in which emphasis is placed on training in the pedagogical skills of teaching values, we will have moved one step closer towards the liberation of children, and the possibility of a world that condones neither sexism, racism nor intolerance. Yet, we are a long way from realising such a world. A comparison with the women's movement makes this even more obvious. The liberation of children, like feminism, can probably be traced back more than a hundred years. Ann Sharp (1997) reminds us that this parallel continued with the onset of feminism's 'second wave', which began in the 1960s. The release of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) in the U.S.A., and later the launch of Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971) in Australia, were just two milestones attesting to this development. She says:

With the development of Philosophy for Children in the late Sixties, one could likewise posit the development of a second wave in the children's liberation movement. Just as exposing women to the tools of and theories of philosophy within the context of conscious-raising groups encouraging dialogue, perspectivism and fallibilism was an essential means in liberating women's potential to effect change in their societies, exposing children to the tools and the theories of philosophy in the context of a community of inquiry had the potential of educating children in such a way that sexism and racism could be overcome and engendering the hope that children could be educated to cultivate their reason, their empathy, their imagination, their creativity for the purpose of making better ethical judgments. (p. 1)

There is still much to overcome before most women can achieve their potential in contemporary societies, especially in the face of women's lived experience. The question remains as to whether philosophy for children can in practice stand beside its own rhetoric to liberate children and to bring about a non-sexist and non-racist society.

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## What good is Philosophy for Children?

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This paper has two parts, the first looking at assumptions underlying the question asked in a recent talk, 'What good are the Arts?' and the second asking whether it is appropriate to ask the same question about Philosophy in schools.

Ramona Koval is currently running a series of five lectures on the ABC radio programme Big Ideas asking whether an appreciation of the arts makes you a better person or whether a society that values the arts is a more civilised one. On 9th October 2005, she was talking to John Carey, professor of literature at Oxford University and author of *What Good are the Arts?* Described by a reviewer of his book as having "a ruthlessly logical mind that cuts through obscurity, pretension, fallacious reasoning and unsupported assertion" Carey's answer to Ramona's basic questions was an unequivocal no. He gives more detail in his book:

- What is a Work of Art? Anything. A urinal can become a work of art if it is placed in a museum.
- Is High Art Superior? No, though one of the reasons it has succeeded is that it makes some people, the wealthy, feel superior to others.
- Can Science help? Not much, because there is no explanation as to why some people respond to some artworks and others not.
- Do the Arts make us better? Not as a rule. Indeed Hitler, a generous patron of the arts, showed us that art could be used to promote

the worst of human crimes and did not have a humanising effect on him.

- Can Art be a religion? No.

In his interview Carey said, "Art gives us feelings that we think very important. Indeed, feelings that we feel to be similar to the feelings we get from religious experience; feelings we describe often as rapture or ecstasy. However, feelings of rapture and ecstasy are not confined to art." Moreover they may not be positive, as in the case of Bill Buford the thug, who got a high from beating people to death. Anyway, it has recently been argued that "the ecstatic feeling you get when you listen to certain bits of music seems to be stimulated by the production of endorphins in the brain," so "It does seem that what one maybe thinks of the spiritual experience has very distinct physical causes in the brain."

The argument is interesting because it follows the philosophical form of finding a counterexample which disproves the theory, placing Carey firmly in the modernist camp. Carey is positive about some art. He believes literature is the supreme art because "literature can transmit ideas, because ideas, concepts, depend on language. Several things follow from that. One is that only literature can actually manufacture a coherent argument that criticises other things, including itself." David Lodge (2005) says in his review that Carey's ruthless scepticism is refreshing but that he uses loaded examples. Barbara Hepworth's sculptures, he says, are works of art because they can't be anything else. More importantly he raises the question of the criteria Carey uses to make something worthwhile or good:

Value is certainly an unreliable basis for formally defining art, but it is at the very heart of the experience of art. Carey goes too far in forbidding us to pronounce other people's aesthetic judgments right or wrong. As a critic, a teacher and a judge of literary prizes he must be constantly engaged in disputing other people's aesthetic judgments. In the second half of the book, he admits that he hopes other people will be convinced by his literary criticism, but points out that this is a discourse of persuasion rather than

demonstration or proof, which is the province of science. (Lodge, 2005, np)

The social value of personal judgments seems to mark a critical difference here between Lodge and Carey. Lodge thinks they are necessary for Art, Carey thinks they are unimportant because they are unscientific and imprecise. Carey's scientific assumptions are revealed. Unfortunately they are still shared by many educators who exclude any judgments that might involve emotion, opinions, personal experience, and immediate context.

In his response to the question "do the arts make people better?" Carey quotes Elliott Eisner whom he sees as the representative of the art educationalist. Eisner concludes in *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002) that it can't be determined with any degree of confidence whether education in the arts affects a student's conduct and contact with the world. Art education, Eisner concludes, teaches you about art, and nothing else, that is, it has no moral purpose. I have argued (Haynes, 2005b) that Eisner himself, even while he seeks to replace science with imagination at the heart of the curriculum, is equally trapped in scientific assumptions of cause and effect. His is a modernist individual constructivism in which a schema is built up from constant conjunction of concrete senses or experiences which match or correspond to "reality," even a social reality of disciplinary structure. The agency for imagination or organization is either brain's memory or experience/habit for Eisner, and I presume Carey.

Eisner says that imagination is a relational tool to release us from conventional structures that art or scientific theory requires, but like Skinner he will have difficulty in explaining how reflection or imagination can change cognitive structures. The only mechanism for independent thinking or artistic creativity is the uniqueness of everyone's past experiences. Eisner acknowledges his allegiance to Hume, rather than to Kant and assumes a Rylean associationism in which the arts are based on a biological foundation of the senses, and "make sense" only through disciplines formed by repeated associations, or by manipulation of

existing mental and social structures. Similarly with Carey. Both Casey and Eisner speak as if Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, and the Critique of Practical Reason were the only formula for all desirable knowledge, and what is emotional, subjective, holistic, transformative, exists outside the realm of empirical or logical truths, not being verifiable, is not worth consideration. I thought that Quine had dismissed the analytic-synthetic distinction some time ago, and certainly both Gödel and the post-modern philosophers have done considerable damage to the notion of grand narratives or the certainty of foundations of logical axioms.

Does this modernist approach have anything to do with Philosophy in Schools? Think about standards in Education, and the pressure on us to have precise and quantifiable identifiers for progress, as in outcome-based education. When a committee was writing the draft proposal for a post-compulsory course on Philosophy and Ethics for Western Australia's Curriculum Council, trying to form it in the spirit of an open Community of Inquiry, it was constantly faced with the constraint of having to make it comprehensible to a teacher who had no knowledge of philosophy. The aim of the course was broad and comprehensive.

In the Philosophy and Ethics course of study students work independently and in collaboration with others to address three main questions: What is real? How do I know? and What ought I do? They reason, make judgments and engage in collaborative inquiry while investigating and responding to a range of philosophical, scientific, ethical, political and social issues. (Curriculum Council, 2004, p.1)

The course of study focused on student achievement of four outcomes related to: philosophical methods; philosophical approaches to making meaning; philosophy and ethics in human affairs; and the application of philosophical and ethical understandings. But the four outcomes had to be couched in terms which made it very clear what the scales of achievement of a higher level entailed. In applying the scales of achievement for the fourth

outcome, the application of philosophical and ethical understandings, for instance, the following four levels had to be identifiable:

**Outcome 4: Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings**

Students use philosophical and ethical strategies to reflect on, evaluate and respond to social and scientific issues.

**Scale of Achievement**

**Level 8**

The student: autonomously analyses and critically evaluates philosophical and ethical issues; devises and articulates strategies to implement a reasoned ethical or philosophical or political strategy to resolve such issues.

**Level 7**

The student: articulates and analyses philosophical, ethical and scientific issues; proposes multiple plausible strategies to resolve such issues in local and other specific contexts.

**Level 6**

The student: identifies different perspectives on philosophical and ethical issues; from an articulated philosophical perspective, prepares a logical argument for a position one might take in relation to the issues.

**Level 5**

The student: describes more than one philosophical approach to practical, social and scientific issues; articulates ethical reasoning a person may use in taking one such approach.

**Level 4**

The student: recognises that there may be more than one philosophical and ethical approach to an issue; gives reasons for value choices that might be made. (Curriculum Council, 2004, p.1)

Moreover not only did these have to be commensurable with similar levels in other Key Learning Areas, but the consulting committee was required to use the same verbs for different levels, as if "recognizing" different philosophical approaches was similar in kind and degree to recognizing different

biological genres and species, or autonomous analysis of an ethical issue was similar in kind and degree to autonomous analysis of a geometrical theorem. What the Curriculum Council called learning contexts was similar in spirit to Lipman's themes, including broad organizers of: Why should I?; Play, pleasure and leisure; Reasons and persons, including identity, culture and aesthetics; Society including Politics; and Meaning, including religion. But these were compartmentalised in the detailed indicators required in a manner that was very different from the structured complexity of Lipman's manuals. For instance in the unit focusing on "What should I do?" the essential content for one section "How should we live?" included:

- Governance: what are laws and how do they differ from rules; what are legal and moral rights and where might they come from; what does it mean to be accountable; what does it mean to be fair?
- Communities and cultures: what is the relationship between work and the health of a community; is there such a thing as "good" work; why should we work; is it OK not to work; what sorts of things can be called work?
- Self and others: in what ways can I look after myself and why should I; what is the difference between a legal duty and a moral duty; to whom do I have these different sorts of duties; how should we behave towards others; what is involved in being a dobber or whistleblower? Identify some of the moral virtues.  
(Curriculum Council, 2004, p.18)

Any educational system has to take care lest it slide into a completely open progressivism, in which the very idea of a school system as a social good is lost. But if it simply focuses on the objective social standards as the sole aim of education it becomes static and rigid, with little that the lived-experience of students can relate to. The phenomenological ("subjective") experience of each child has to be recognized in order for the cognitive systems to

connect with or engage the child. I have deliberately chosen the area of ethics from the Philosophy course because it is similar to the arts in requiring the exercise of personal judgment, that wonderful combination of knowledge and experience. Judgment requires not only reason but imagination to apply the knowledge to new contexts and products, and it must be an active imagination, not the prosaic rearrangement of cognitive bits of information which de Bono assumes lies at the heart of creativity. So the words used in the following outcomes from the philosophy course turn our focus away from the felt experience to the intellectual and cognitive activities that can be easily measured against external standards locked into a traditional view of intelligence.

In this unit students will be able to reflect on Self and how Self relates to the world. Teachers should select learning contexts that tap into the interests of their students.

Students will be introduced to the language of Philosophy and Ethics, learning to distinguish fact and opinion, recognising arguments and formulating hypotheses, understanding key concepts such as harm, benefit, obligation, duty. They will be introduced to a critique of scientific reason and engage with moral questions related to fairness, accountability, rights and laws. They will investigate the idea of community work and how to look after themselves and others. (Curriculum Council 2004 p.10)

Standards and precise definitions are important, as Roger Slee has noted, to give us scaffolding for what we think is important. But they aren't all there is to Art, Ethics and Education. What we need is imagination, which Kant finally recognised in *The Critique of Judgement* as the Apotheosis of Reason. Imagination is not rational, though it can be governed by Reason. Coleridge divided imagination into three kinds. In its most mundane form it is Fancy, rearranging things by using reason and staying within the cultural box. This prosaic Imagination, like analogy, is simply a recombination of existing concepts. At the top end is a Kantian sublime, which was awesome, ineffable, indescribable wonderful. Have

any of you had a mystical experience? An experience of ecstasy? It is all too rare in schools. This is the Primary Imagination, the Sublime. It comes from our minds, in contact with an immense unity, an awareness of the infinite, even in mathematics. We can't even talk about it. But having experienced it, the desire to share it with others leads us to try to separate it out in to words or separate bits to understand it, and that is the Secondary Imagination which drives artists and creative people to make works of art and new theories. As Plato and Lipman realised, Philosophy begins in wonder.

So Carey doesn't understand what good are the Arts, because he doesn't understand the transformative nature of Secondary Imagination which sees things differently. What good are the Arts? They allow the active Imagination to pull the sublime or unrepresentable into new rational structures in a dual process of differentiation and integration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p.36). What good is Philosophy in schools? Or better still, because most of you readers think it is good, what makes it so successful in helping kids to learn?

I want to suggest that it works, at all levels and ages, because it does teach philosophy, but requires kids to do Philosophy. It requires them to confront what is to them the unrepresentable. It uses this Secondary Imagination to provide a bridge between our existing objective standards of knowledge, the things we can measure, and this fluid dynamic making of meaning that every student is always engaged in. That is, it doesn't look just to mark the correct answers, the measurable levels of achievement, but it seeks to extend the horizons of each student so that they see things differently. Of course this is not the way philosophy was taught in universities, but it is the way Socrates and Plato practised it, entering into conversation with those who they knew disagreed with them and provoking them to give good reasons for their answers. It depends on what Plato called aporia, revealing to students when they thought they had the right answer that they do not know how to go on. Meno offers a good example: "Do you see how the slave

thought he knew the answer and then found he did not?" We find it in Socrates' image of himself as an electric eel that stuns people into realising the limitations of their earlier cognitive structures. Perhaps this is what Piaget meant when he says you need disturbance to the equilibrium of your cognitive structures before you can proceed to the next level. But Piaget was stuck in a hierarchy which leads only to abstract reasoning, like Kohlberg, and Imagination requires something more embodied, complex, more fluid and flexible than that. It is a reflexive social type of learning in which we are continually interpreting and adjusting the ways in which we see. In the Community of Inquiry which is at the centre of Philosophy for Children, we think we have good reasons for our opinions and beliefs, but when we have to expose them to the scrutiny of others, and provide explanations and justifications for those who do not understand our point of view, we can see that we might have been wrong or limited in our own views. The social interaction within a community requires difference to challenge our complacency.

In the 1980s Bert Dreyfus wanted to make up a simple developmental model of reflective skills to keep this continuous interaction open to new experiences in our minds: Novice, Advanced Beginner, Competence, Proficiency and Expertise. Remember that Socrates said "The unexamined life is not worth living." If we remain at the level of expert as dictated by Level 8, say, we do not progress. We become rigid and dogmatic, locked into the facts and scientific explanations so much a part of Carey's worldview. So educators refined Dreyfus' skills list to that series: Unconscious Incompetence, Conscious Incompetence, Conscious Competence, Unconscious Competence, where intuition and mastery takes over the explicitly learnt knowledge and critique. To try to get students to the stage where they can deliver good reasons for their actions without thinking about it, so that they live the reflective life continuously is one of the reasons for letting them practise complex active listening, active debate, and active defence of their own ideas to try to persuade others by reason. This is

not an inert philosophy but a fluid dynamic which does not stay still enough for us to measure easily.

So just recently Dreyfus (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2000) has used his understanding of Heidegger and an awareness of Being to add two more stages. Stage 6: Mastery and Stage 7: Practical reasoning, which involve increasing self-awareness and concern for some enhanced version of personal coherence or integrity all of which are aspects of the reflexivity which he requires for the continuous formation and growth of self. It's not merely about raising critical awareness of some of our presuppositions and pre-understanding because it goes together with an enhanced and transforming sense of responsibility for these matters; a growth of self in response to social others.

So Philosophy uses the Secondary Imagination or judgment to adjust conventional structures to meet the Other, the Unpresentable, and this judgement enables us to grow as ethical and responsible people. It helps us to understand and therefore not exclude the Other. More importantly, it is this desire to communicate in some language, whether it is music dance, visual images, sculpture or literature that makes the artist struggle to present in some form a similar unpresentable experience. With respect to Carey, it is not necessary to have words make great works of art. What good is a work of art? It is the struggle between Reason and imagination to present the unpresentable, something that exists just outside our boundaries of knowledge. The contribution of the active imagination is that it enables this flexibility and widening of horizons. And the contribution of Philosophy in Schools is that it places students in an open community of inquiry to expose them to the Other without danger or tension to move them beyond the level of tired stale Fancy.

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# Effective anti-racism education in Australian schools: the need for philosophical inquiry in teacher education programs

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## Abstract

This paper is concerned with the role education might have in the realisation of social justice for Aboriginal people in Australia. It is argued that the two national goals of anti-racism education, viz. the goals of curricular justice and wider responsibility, are worthy educational goals in that, were they to be met, Australian education might well contribute significantly to bringing about social justice for Australian Aboriginal people. On the basis of philosophical argument and appeal to current educational policy, it is argued that a necessary condition for the achievement of these goals is that teachers both adopt a social justice aim of education and operate with a needs-based notion of social justice. Clearly, pre-service teacher education courses need to concern themselves with the development of these notions. The need is pressing: a study examining pre-service teachers' aims of education and notions of social justice in relation to anti-racism education indicates that only a small minority of South Australian pre-service teachers satisfy the conditions necessary for the effective implementation of anti-racism education. The implications for teacher education courses are clear. Pre-service teachers, whatever else they do, must engage in philosophical inquiry with their peers into the nature of both the aim of education and the notion of social justice.

## Introduction

It is indisputable that Australian Aboriginal people as a group suffer great social and economic disadvantage 'in both absolute terms and in comparison to the position of the non-Aboriginal society' (Johnston, 1991a, p. 62). They have a significantly reduced life expectancy compared to non-Aboriginal people, significantly lower high school retention rates, lower median family income, significantly higher jobless rate and long term unemployment rate and have a significantly higher rate of incarceration (twenty six

times the rate of non-Aboriginal people): a severe over representation (ATSIC cited in McGeough, 1996; Cunneen, 1990; Watson, 1996). Beyond doubt too, is that the notion of 'race' has no biological basis and that corresponding notions of biological inferiority have been found conclusively to be false (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman, 1988). Hence the relative disadvantage of Aboriginal people in relation to the distribution of goods and services can be described as the result of racism, a term which carries a sense of moral wrongness or injustice. Australian educational authorities recognise that this disadvantage has relevance to schooling. Racial justice, as one form of social justice, is widely seen as a goal for schooling in Australia (DECS, 2001; DETE, 2003) and anti-racism education is recognised as providing the means for redressing such disadvantage (Rizvi & Crowley, 1993).

Education for social justice in relation to Aboriginal people has two distinct goals:

- The curricular justice goal, which has as its objective the provision of educational opportunity and outcomes.
- The wider responsibility goal, which focuses on educating all students for social justice and anti-racism through programs of anti-racism education.

The first of these two goals derives from the recognition that education is an agent of social disadvantage; that limited success in education is a crucial factor in determining the conditions of many Aboriginal peoples' lives. The second goal reflects the fact that 'the greater responsibility for the task [of achieving racial justice] lies with the majority society not the minorities' (Lynch, 1992, p. i).

The crucial part teachers' beliefs play in the implementation of educational policy is well documented (Boyd & Arnold, 2000). It will be argued that a necessary condition for effective anti-racism education is that teachers hold racial justice, and more generally social justice, as an aim of education. However U.S. research into pre-service teachers' beliefs about what schools are for indicates that pre-service teachers fail to see education as fulfilling a

social role, instead seeing schooling as having an exclusively individual aim, namely that of 'helping develop [students'] interests and abilities to their full potential' (Su, 1992). It will be argued that although individual and social aims are consistent, the aim of developing students' interests and abilities is distinct from, and does not entail a social justice aim of education. Given the emphasis on anti-racism education in Australia, it is important to investigate the beliefs of Australian pre-service teachers in relation to the goals and aims of education. To reiterate, unless teachers understand clearly that the goal of anti-racism education is social justice for Aboriginal people they will be unlikely to deliver effective anti-racism education.

Yet, the notion of social justice is a contested one. There are conflicting principles describing how benefits and burdens and goods and services should be distributed. These principles of distributive justice have been the subject of debate for more than 2500 years. In very broad terms it can be said that there are three major competing principles: to each person an equal share, to each person according to merit (or desert) and to each person according to individual needs (Beauchamp, 2001). It will be argued that unless teachers have a clear notion of social justice, and more particularly a clear needs-based notion of social justice, as an aim of education, they will be unable to teach effectively for social justice and so will be unable to deliver anti-racism education effectively. It will be argued further that if teachers operate with the 'equal share-based' or 'merit based' notions of social justice, they will potentially serve to perpetuate further injustices in society, including the injustices suffered by Aboriginal people. The need to investigate Australian pre-service teachers' beliefs about the aims of education and notions of social justice in relation to contemporary Aboriginal issues is clear. The empirical component of this paper attempts to identify pre-service teachers' beliefs on these matters.

#### Effective anti-racism education

For the purposes of this paper the term 'racism' will be construed broadly to incorporate both the belief that a

group is racially superior to another on the basis of 'race' and related ethnicity, and the individual and social practices to which the belief gives rise, including these practices: individual prejudice and racism, differential treatment based on fear and suspicion as well as the broadest form, institutional racism, which is the disadvantaging of perceived racial groups in the distribution of social goods and services, and the defence and maintenance of the social institutions through which distribution takes place.<sup>1</sup> Anti-racism education then is defined as education with the aim of eradicating all forms of racism.<sup>2</sup>

As indicated earlier, anti-racism education has two distinct goals, namely the curricular justice goal and the wider responsibility goal. These two goals are identified in the Department for Education, Training and Employment (DETE) policy as goals of the Aboriginal Studies curriculum (2000). While the curricular justice goal of Aboriginal studies is identified as that of providing a supportive learning environment for Aboriginal students, thereby promoting improved outcomes through increased self-esteem, the curriculum document indicates that this goal is to be met through the provision of culturally relevant curriculum. The second goal of Aboriginal Studies aims to counter racism through fostering awareness in all students of issues of Aboriginality and identifying the prevalence and causes of racism.<sup>3</sup>

The need for curricular justice for Aboriginal students  
In educational terms, Aboriginal students have significantly lower outcomes when compared with non-Aboriginal students. This is especially noticeable in literacy and numeracy outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p. 90). The high school retention rate is lower than that of non-Aboriginal students (p. 69). This can be seen in the proportionately low number of Aboriginal students who complete their high school

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<sup>1</sup> See Pettman, 1986; McConnochie et. al., 1988; Partington & McCudden, 1992; Rizvi, 1990; Troyna & Carrington, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> See Boyd & Arnold, 2000; Ng, Scane & Staton, 1995; Rezai-Rashti, 1995; Rizvi & Crowley, 1993; Short & Carrington, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> See DEET, 1989; DETE, 2000; Education Department of South Australia, 1988; MCEETYA, 1995.

studies, a figure particularly relevant in South Australia as only forty six Indigenous students completed their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) in 1999 (Mercurio & Clayton, 2001). In addition, the number of Aboriginal people working in education is proportionately lower than that of non-Aboriginal people (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p. 42).<sup>4</sup>

Commissioner Johnston (1991a) stated in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody National Report:

[A]lthough there has been significant improvement in the last two decades, Aboriginal people are still identifiable as the most poorly educated group in Australia. (p. 348)

Johnston goes on to point out that:

[P]oor educational participation and achievement in turn limit the capacity of Aboriginal people to make real choices about their participation in the economy more generally. A diminished educational opportunity effectively denies Aboriginal people access to the full range of resources which could help them shape their lives and communities according to their own vision and aspirations. (p. 336)

Limited education is a crucial factor in determining the conditions of many Aboriginal peoples' lives. Redressing this social injustice is about delivering better educational opportunity and outcomes. Education is an agent of social disadvantage. More broadly education maintains and even perpetuates social injustice by means of institutional racism in relation to Aboriginal people. However meeting the curricular needs of minority students is not the only aim of anti-racism education.

The wider responsibility goal

The second and broader aim of anti-racism education is that of redressing racially based social disadvantage

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<sup>4</sup> See also Johnston, 1991a; McCrae et al, 2000.

or social injustice. The aim is to expose every student to an education which denounces racial injustice in all areas of society, analyses current structures in society and challenges and empowers students as agents in the reconstruction of a racially just society (Boyd & Arnold, 2001; Lingard, 1995; Lynch, 1987).

Lynch (1987) notes that a survey of relevant literature shows that it is overwhelmingly minority groups that have been the focus of anti-racism education and prejudice reduction in schools. Lynch points out that these groups, because they are minorities, are unlikely to effect great change in the broader society, especially taking into account the socially reproductive nature of education, which can serve to perpetuate the injustices that racism and, in particular, institutional racism thrive upon. Surely he is right: it is the responsibility of all members of society to eradicate discrimination and prejudice. As Lynch (1987, p. i) puts it, '... the greater responsibility for the task lies with the majority society not the minorities'. The point is recognized in the National Report of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995), which states in its recommendations (Recommendation 27):

That courses aimed at improving non-indigenous Australians' understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures be made mandatory element of the curriculum of courses at all levels of education.

#### Teachers' role in implementing anti-racism education

Clearly, institutions such as education and schools can be racist institutions even if all the people working in them are not individually or ideologically racist (Hollinsworth, 1998). Racism can be perpetuated through policy at a departmental level, whole school level and at the classroom level, indeed in the pre-service education of teachers. Yet teachers are key agents and both direct educational policy in the classroom and implement departmental policy in schools. Even where educational policy and curriculum are explicitly anti-racist, the provision of anti-racism

education depends on teachers implementing this policy and curriculum effectively. Rizvi and Crowley (1993, p. 144) point out that teachers are key agents in reforming education: unless they have an adequate understanding of the role of education in sustaining or amending racism, the goals of anti-racism education, multiculturalism and reconciliation can not be realised. Teachers need to understand clearly that the goal of anti-racism education is social justice for Aboriginal people. Boyd and Arnold (2000) reiterate this position:

programmes of anti-racism education may face significant problems of implementation when there are points of disjuncture between their defining aims and teachers' interpretation of those aims. (p. 24, my emphasis)

Both Rizvi and Crowley (1993) and Boyd and Arnold (2000) indicate their surprise at how little attention has been given to the investigation of teachers' beliefs in relation to anti-racism education, considering the obvious importance attached to teachers and their role in implementing anti-racism education. In their critique of teacher education programs for example, Rizvi and Crowley (1993) argue that to a large extent teachers develop their commonsense ideas about cultural difference and racism though pre-service teacher education. More generally, it seems plausible to suggest that it is in their pre-service education that teachers will develop their aims of education and notions of social justice. The University of South Australia's recent Review of Education (2001) makes clear that programs which prepare educators must address these issues 'if education is to fulfill the goal of shaping a fairer society where all people are able to lead full and productive lives' (University of South Australia, 2001, p. 47).

#### Aims of education

Education, it has long been argued, should have both individual and social ends. As Knight and Collins (2002) point out:

In the West, the argument goes back at least to Plato's Republic. This tradition identifies the social end with the development of a just democracy, so that the fundamental goal of education is seen as one of equipping individuals to function optimally as members of a just democracy. (p. 1)

Recently, Su (1992) has investigated U.S. pre-service teachers' beliefs about 'what schools are for', using Sironnik's account of the views people hold on the aims of education. These fall into four main categories:

The conservative view: schools should reproduce educated young people who are ready to take their place in society to help maintain order and stability in the social, political, and economic fabric of society.

The progressive or child centred view: schools should concentrate on children and youth as individuals, helping them develop their interests and abilities to their full potential.

The liberal view: schools should educate young people to be aware of human conditions, social purposes, and societal concerns, and to think creatively and constructively and be willing and able to participate in improving society for the better.

The radical view: schools should educate young people to challenge unjust societal conditions and practices and join with others in reconstructing and transforming the existing social order into a more just and equitable society. (Sironnik, cited in Su, 1992, p. 134)

While the second of Sironnik's positions describes the aim of education as individual development, the remaining three positions specify the aim as social. For the purposes of this paper social aims are defined as aims that focus on the good of society. Individual aims are defined as aims that focus on the good of the individual. It is important to note that the individual and social aims are not exclusive. More particularly, the adoption of a social aim does not preclude the adoption of an individual aim, and the converse also holds. Yet, Su (1992) reported that the majority of pre-service teachers in the United States indicated they

held an exclusively individual aim of education. That is, they believed 'School should concentrate on children and youth as individuals, helping develop their interest and abilities to their full potential' (p. 140). On the whole, pre-service teachers failed to see education as fulfilling a social role when indicating their aim of education.

The point cannot be argued in detail here, but it seems clear that the good of society can not be reduced to the sum of the good of its individual members. This is because a society amounts to more than the sum of the individuals which make it up; a society consists of its members together with the multiple relations which obtain between them.<sup>5</sup> The greatest overall good may well depend upon individuals sacrificing self-interest. The good of society can not be reduced to the sum of the good of its individual members. The aim of developing all individuals to their full potential does not bring with it the goal of teaching for the good of society. Boyd and Arnold (2000) make clear the implications for anti-racism education:

Teachers who focus their thinking about education almost exclusively on what is of benefit to an individual student will find it impossible, we submit, to understand and promote the intended moral and political aims of anti-racism education programmes. (p.31)

With this in mind, it is important to investigate pre-service teachers' beliefs about aims of education.

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<sup>5</sup> One well known argument to show that the good of society is not given by the sum of the good of each individual member appeals to the Prisoner's Dilemma. See Kuhn (2003).

### Social justice as an aim of education

Social justice is a central aim of education in Australia. In South Australia this aim is clearly stated in the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA). The framework has a 'focus on equity':

The SACSA Framework reaffirms a long-held belief that education is central to the making of a fairer society...equity is made a central curriculum consideration... In this way learners come to recognise the nature and causes of inequality, and understand that these are socially constructed and can therefore be changed through people's actions. (DECS, 2001, p. 7, my emphasis)

It is clear that the SACSA Framework uses the term 'equity' in the sense of 'fairness' or 'social justice'. In what follows the terms 'equity' and 'social justice' will be used interchangeably.

It has been argued that effective teaching for social justice and, more particularly, effective teaching for anti-racism education in relation to Aboriginal people, requires that teachers adopt a social aim as one of their aims of education. As indicated, Sirotnik (cited in Su, 1992) identified three social aims of education (i.e., aims which focus on the good of society). The first of these is the 'reproduction' or 'conservative' aim. Clearly, reproduction, while a social rather than an individual aim, will only lead to social justice if the society being reproduced is a socially just society. It would be hard to argue that current Australian society was as just as it could be and for a prime example of the inequities in Australia one only has to look at the position of Aboriginal people as a group in Australian society. Effective anti-racism education then, requires teachers to adopt one of the remaining two social goals:

Schools should educate young people to be aware of human conditions, social purposes, and societal concerns, and to think creatively and constructively and be willing and able to participate in improving society for the better or

Schools should educate young people to challenge unjust societal conditions and practices and join with others in reconstructing and transforming the existing social order into a more just and equitable society. (Sirontnik, cited in Su, 1992, p. 134)

These social aims will be called social justice or equity goals.

#### Notions of social justice

Social or distributive justice is centred on the way primary goods are distributed in society. The principles of social justice define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens in society.<sup>6</sup> Yet the notion of social justice is a contested one: a number of distinct and conflicting principles of distributive justice have been proposed. These principles, which can also be referred to as principles of fairness or social justice, offer conflicting accounts of the basis on which benefits and burdens and goods and services should be distributed. Nagel (1987) states clearly conditions of adequacy which distributive principles must satisfy: any such principle must be counted as unjust '... when people suffer disadvantages through no fault of their own, merely as the result of the ordinary operation of the socio-economic system into which they are born ... if this could be prevented' (p. 81).

Principles of distributive justice fall into three main categories. Within each of these categories it is possible to identify several distinct principles, which differ in their detail. For the purposes of this paper, however, only the three major types of principles will be discussed. These major material principles of distributive justice have been identified as the following: to each person an equal share (equal share-based); to each person according to merit (merit-based); and to each person according to individual needs (needs-based). Common to all three theories is a minimal principle accredited to Aristotle: Equals must be treated equally and unequals unequally. The three principles identify different individual characteristics as the qualities which warrant differential treatment.

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<sup>6</sup> See Rawls, 1971; Beauchamp, 2001.

In other words, given that no two individuals are equal in all respects, the principles offer different accounts of the respects of similarity and difference which are relevant to the distribution of goods and services, benefits and burdens. It is clear that in judging both the absolute and relative disadvantage of Aboriginal people as unjust, it has been a premise of this paper that differences in 'race' do not warrant a differential distribution of social goods. A brief outline of the three major distributive principles follows.

#### Equal share-based

The notion of equal of equal share-based social justice is based on the view that people are to be judged as equal in all respects, and that in accordance with this idea each person should be given the same amount and the same types of goods and services. This notion of social justice embodies the idea of fairness to which Pauline Hanson<sup>7</sup> and her supporters subscribe. For example, One Nation educational policy proposed that the educational allowance for Aboriginal students be reduced to the value of the general Austudy allowance paid to non-Aboriginal students. This illustrates the nature of the impact an equal share-based notion of social justice would have on educational policy. In terms of educational practice the equal share-based principle directs teachers to divide available time, energy and resources equally amongst their students. The equal share-based principle makes it unjust to allocate more resources to those students whose basic numeracy and literacy skills are below the level required for full participation in society. The crucial difficulty with this notion is that people begin with different social benefits and burdens; at least some of them undeserved. They are not equal in all respects, so that distributing equal bundles of social goods will result in undeserved inequalities; inequalities which, it is plausible to suggest could be prevented through redistribution, by means such as redistributive taxation and a social welfare system (Nagel, 1987).

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<sup>7</sup> Pauline Hanson, former leader of the One Nation party.

### Merit (or Desert)

Merit as a notion of social justice is centred on what people deserve. It is based on the belief that the differences between individuals that are relevant to the differential distribution of social goods are the contributions individuals make to the production of social benefits. On this view, those who produce more social wealth deserve higher incomes. This principle has clear implications for educational practice: higher achieving students who are more likely to contribute to the social product should be rewarded with a larger allocation of educational resources. Like the equal share-based theory, the desert principle has been subjected to substantial objections, the most important of which is that it makes economic and social benefits dependent on factors over which people have little control (including educational opportunities). Again, the result of distributing social goods on the basis of merit would be a society in which some people are significantly disadvantaged through no fault of their own. And again, it seems clear that such an outcome could be prevented through redistribution.

### Individual need (needs-based)

The most plausible needs-based principle is of a form of Rawlsian theory which suggests that social goods should be distributed in such a way as to ensure that the basic needs of all individuals in the society are met. This principle presupposes that all human beings are equal in this respect, namely that there are some human needs such that where they are not met an individual's life falls short of being a good human life. As Nussbaum (1999) puts it, these basic human needs or central human functional capabilities indicate what 'all citizens should have, what ever else they have and pursue' (pp. 41-42). This needs-based principle demands redistribution of social goods where this is necessary to meet basic human needs. In educational terms this would mean allocating greater levels of educational goods and services to those students whose educational outcomes are not sufficient to allow them to participate fully in society. This Rawlsian theory is widely accepted by philosophers today as approaching best current theory, despite some acknowledged

weaknesses. Something like the Rawlsian principle is implicit in DETE's Equity Policy Statement which states that:

The department is committed to assisting sites and services to achieve equitable outcomes, by allocating resources differentially and by providing targeted groups resources and support to learners with the greatest needs. (DETE, accessed 2003, p. 3)

This degree of clarity in the definition of social justice is unusual. On the whole, as has been argued, educational policy documents fail to explicitly define the terms 'equity' and 'social justice'.

In educational policy documents the terms 'equitable outcomes' and 'equity' are often used interchangeably. Lingard (1995), for example, defines equity as 'access to, performance in and more equitable outcomes from schooling'. The SACSA Framework's statement on equity (2001) is representative of much educational policy in that notions of social justice equity and fairness are used interchangeably and without definition. However on the basis of the educational usage of the term 'equity' described above, it seems reasonable to interpret DETE's (2003) use of this term as referring to a needs-based notion of social justice. But this narrow use of the term 'equity' is not universal: philosophers for example often use this term as synonymous with the class of principles of social justice. In the interests of clarity, we will follow this usage and use the term needs-based notion of social justice to pick out this particular principle of distributive justice.

It seems clear that a needs-based notion of social justice meets Nagel's (1987) necessary condition of adequacy: The principle demands redistribution of social goods to prevent 'people living under significant material and social disadvantages through no fault of their own ...' (p. 85). As the previous discussion makes clear, the workings of the Australian socio-economic system have placed Aboriginal people in this position: Aboriginal people live 'under significant material and social disadvantages' and this is 'through no fault of their own', as is captured in the term 'racism'. And it

seems clear that the resources of our society are such that it is possible to redistribute social goods to meet the basic human needs of all its members (Nagel, 1987). The needs-based principle, alone among the three material principles of social justice, has the potential to eradicate racism.

Given the important role teachers' beliefs play in the interpretation of educational policy, it can be argued that effective anti-racism education depends on teachers adopting a needs-based principle of distributive justice. If, as has been argued, teachers develop their ideas about racism to a large extent during pre-service teacher education, it is important to determine the notions of social justice pre-service teachers operate with in relation to contemporary Aboriginal issues.

On the basis of both philosophical argument and appeal to current educational policy, it can be argued that in order to engage in effective anti-racism education teachers must not only adopt a social justice aim of education, they must adopt a needs-based principle of distributive justice or a needs-based social justice goal. The implementation of effective anti-racism education which is anti-racism education driven by a needs-based social justice goal, will, on a practical level, result in improved educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal students. Further, improved educational outcomes will contribute to the enhancement of the overall position of Aboriginal people in society. However, teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in the interpretation of policy.

To achieve the greater goal of racial justice for Aboriginal people, then, it is also imperative that teachers themselves, and ultimately their students, understand that in the reconstruction of a racially just society there needs to be redistribution of economic and social wealth which will enable all people to at least reach a level where their basic human needs are met and allow them to participate fully in society. Given that teachers develop, in part at least, both their ideas of social justice and their aims of education during their teacher training programs, it seems

pertinent to investigate pre-service teachers' aims of education and notions of social justice.

This research then, aimed to answer the following two questions: To what extent is it possible to identify pre-service teachers' beliefs about the aims of education? To what extent is it possible to identify the notions of social justice pre-service teachers operate with in relation to contemporary Aboriginal issues? A summary of the methodology and main findings from the empirical component of this research project follows.

### Quantitative study

#### Summary of methodology

The target population for this quantitative study consisted of pre-service teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Junior Primary and Primary) program, University of South Australia. The convenience sample consisted of 281 participants (N=281). For comparative purposes two main cohorts within the research population were targeted: first year pre-service teachers who had limited exposure to the Education program, and third and fourth year pre-service teachers who were in the latter half of their degrees and would be typically be entering teaching positions within the next two years. A sample of 160 first year students, 100 third year and 100 fourth year students was selected. Numerical data were gathered using a distributed directed questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study and includes adapted segments from other relevant studies (Goodlad, 1984 and Sirotnik, 1989, both cited in Su, 1992).<sup>8</sup> It was designed to gather demographic data, including information on whether or not participants had undertaken (or were then undertaking) any course with an explicit social justice focus. Primarily however, the survey was designed to gather information on participants' beliefs about the aims of primary and junior primary education, and on the notion of social justice with which participants

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<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire and a detailed technical description of the statistical analysis and findings are available on request from the author.

were operating. Quantitative analysis of the data was undertaken using the SPSS package.

#### Summary of findings

As indicated, the aim of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' notions of social justice and aims of education in order to determine whether they meet one of the conditions necessary for the implementation of effective anti-racism programs in schools.

On the whole, the findings were concerning.

The descriptive data reveal that the majority of pre-service teachers in this study agree that anti-racism education is relevant to schools with Aboriginal populations and to both public and private schools with white populations. The majority of pre-service teachers in the study agree that all of Sirotnik's four broad aims are valid aims of education.

When asked to choose one of Sirotnik's four statements of the aims of education in a forced choice context, 8% indicated that the broad aim Maintain order and stability most closely represented their view on what schools are for. Approximately half (50.4%) believed the broad aim Individual interests and abilities, to be the aim that most closely represented their view on what schools are for, while 28% of participants indicated that the aim that most closely represented their view on what schools are for is the broad aim Improve society. Finally, 14% chose the Transforming into a fair and equitable society statement to be the broad aim that most closely represented their view on what schools are for.

The two aims, Improving society and Transforming into a fair and equitable society were found to correlate significantly ( $r(n=280) = 0.46, p < .001$ ). After combining the two social justice aims, 39% of respondents, indicated having a social aim of Improving society or Transforming into a fair and equitable society. In short, fewer than half of the participants hold a social aim of education.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements which reflect three different notions of social justice (merit-based, equal share-based and needs-based). The statements all related to contemporary educational issues concerning

Aboriginal students. Only 35 % of respondents were identified as operating with a needs-based notion of social justice. There was a significant negative correlation between needs and equal share notions of social justice, suggesting that over half of the pre-service teacher participants are operating an equal share based notion of social justice.

A mere 17% or pre-service teachers in the study were identified as holding a social justice aim of education and a needs-based notion of social justice.

In addition, the findings revealed that participating pre-service teachers who had studied courses with a philosophy component were significantly more likely to operate with a needs-based notion of social justice than participants who had not studied such courses.

#### Discussion of findings

Given that only 39% of the pre-service teacher participants were found to hold a needs-based notion of social justice, it is clear that fewer than half of the sampled pre-service teachers are operating from the premise that social goods should be distributed on the basis of need rather than on the basis of equal share, ensuring redistribution of social goods where this is necessary to meet the basic needs of all humans. This group of pre-service teachers is indicating that greater levels of educational goods and services should be allocated to those students whose educational outcomes are not sufficient to allow them to participate fully in society. This is the notion of social justice which effective anti-racism education demands.

The adoption of this needs-based notion of social justice is a necessary condition for the implementation of the curricular justice goal of anti-racism education. Provision of educational opportunity and outcomes meeting the immediate needs of Aboriginal students through an inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum is dependent upon the adoption of this needs-based notion of social justice. It is also clear that the needs-based notion of social justice underpins the wider responsibility goal of anti-racism education. This notion advocates the distribution of goods in such a

way as to ensure that the basic needs of all individuals in the society are met. The needs principle presupposes that all humans are equal in this respect, namely that there are some human needs such that where they are not met an individual's life falls short of being a good human life.

On the other hand, an equal share notion of social justice, held by over half of the pre-service teacher participants, fails to meet a necessary condition of adequacy for theories of social justice, namely that the theory demands that action be taken to prevent a situation in which 'people live ... under significant material and social disadvantage through no fault of their own ...' (Nagel, 1987). In general this is the situation Aboriginal people as a group find themselves in: a situation which can be characterised as one of racism. A teacher adopting an equal share notion of social justice could not justify the differential distribution of educational time and resources necessary to achieve the first goal of anti-racism education, the curricular justice goal. It seems that such a teacher could not promote a redistribution of social goods to the benefit of disadvantaged groups, and thus would be rendered ineffective in working towards the second goal of anti-racism education, the wider responsibility goal. Therefore it is unlikely that pre-service teachers who operate with an equal share-based notion of social justice will be able to effectively implement programs of anti-racism education.

### Conclusion

As has been argued, a necessary condition for the achievement of the two goals of anti-racism education is that teachers operate with both a social justice aim of education and a needs-based notion of social justice. In order to engage in effective anti-racism education, then, teachers must operate with both of these principles.

The findings of this study give cause for concern, given the pressing need to redress the disadvantages suffered by Aboriginal people and the social justice role which anti-racism education can play. The results of this study showed that in judging a social justice goal of education to be considerably less important

than an the goal of developing individuals interests and abilities, the pre-service teachers in the current study indicate a limited capacity to implement anti-racism education effectively in schools. This result is compounded by the further finding that less than half the sample population exhibits a high level of the needs-based notion of social justice, and finally, that only 17% of the sample both exhibit high levels of needs-based social justice and hold a social justice aim of education. Only 17% of pre-service teachers in the sample, then, satisfy the necessary condition for effective implementation of anti-racism education.

These findings are disturbing in the face of what can be seen as the potential of anti-racism education to contribute to the establishment of social justice for Aboriginal people. They suggest that some factors in the education course have a significant effect on the development of pre-service teachers' notions of social justice, more particularly on moving pre-service teachers' notions of social justice from an equal share to a needs-based notion. Progression through the education program, and more specifically successive progression through courses in the education program which are grounded in philosophy, and more specifically, philosophical inquiry via a Community of Inquiry, have a significant effect on pre-service teachers' notions of social justice. Those of us working within Philosophy for Children<sup>9</sup> will not be surprised by this finding. We know that philosophical inquiry undertaken in collaboration with one's peers fosters a disposition to both think for one's self about important ethical notions and to search for good reasons, as well as equipping individuals with the skills to distinguish good reasons from bad. If educational authorities are serious in their call for anti-racism education, they must be helped to see that the realisation of their goal demands significant changes within teacher education programs within Australia. Pre-service teachers, whatever else they do, must engage in philosophical inquiry with their peers into the nature of both the aim of education and the notion of social justice. This

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<sup>9</sup> See Lipman's (2003) for a description of this educational program.

is timely given the current national review into teacher education. Those of us working within Philosophy for Children must make our voices heard.

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## A quick glance at the Lipman method: reflections on a conference

Oscar Brenifier

For a number of years I have been involved in working on the pedagogy of philosophy, as a practitioner, researcher and writer. More recently, I have been developing methods for training elementary school teachers in philosophical practice and discussion. In this context, unfamiliar with the works of Matthew Lipman, the founder of what is known as Philosophy for Children, I decided to attend one of the international conferences that are held regularly around the world by this movement, this time in Varna, Bulgaria. The following article does not pretend to be an exhaustive and detailed analysis of what happened at this conference or an in-depth study of the Lipman method, but only a reflection on the practice of philosophizing with children and philosophizing in general, as provoked by events and debates that took place in Varna. So I will pay more attention to the general issues raised by attending this conference than to the conference itself. I hope that the persons who may recognize themselves in the comments throughout this paper do not resent the fact I do not mention the specific details of the events and comments. First, it seems to me that such omissions can help us to think more generally about the issues involved. Problems are often more productive and enlightening when they do not bear the weight of being personal. Secondly, this article should be understood

as a very subjective perception of an event that involved numerous different persons, activities and discussions.

#### Initial comments

On the first evening of the conference, I went to see a group of pupils who had been involved in philosophical activity over the year, in order to see what remained in their mind about this very particular subject matter. I asked them if they liked what they had done and their answer was affirmative, which did not come as a surprise, since they had decided to spend some holiday time to attend this conference as active participants. Then, I asked them what they liked about this activity, and they told me they particularly appreciated the fact that in philosophy there was no right and wrong, and that each person could say what they wanted. Now, as friendly and visibly enthusiastic as these students were, their response somewhat surprised me. I am used to hearing exactly this kind of statement, and I try to take it on quickly in the first sessions of philosophy classes. Of course, this kind of statement is almost certain to occur, for two reasons. The first one is that relativism is a very current and widespread form of opinion. The second is that pupils who have been in school for years, where day in day out they are told what that this or that is the truth, that have to learn to spit it out in order to be successful in school, will seize the first opportunity given to them to declare themselves free from this boring and gruesome burden, especially when they are teen-agers. On the other hand, they should not succumb to a simpleminded subjectivity in order to repudiate the dogmatic arbitrariness of adults, parents or teachers, no less shallow and arbitrary as the ideology they pretend to combat. The "it's like this because it is like this" of the adult is being replaced by "it's like this because it is like this" of the child.

We have to account for our own speech, says Plato, which means taking full responsibility for it, through the act of analyzing, proving, justifying, problematising, and so on. Certainly the act of thinking is the act of giving birth, but if some ideas are beautiful babies, some are little monsters, he says, and

the art of philosophizing is not simply the art of spelling out ideas, but the one of verifying, enhancing and discriminating ideas. Everyone can produce ideas about almost anything, but the art of producing beautiful ideas, and learning to recognize them, is another matter. To put paint on a white board is one thing, to paint is yet another.

These comments by the pupils were going to weigh on my mind during the whole conference. Was such an idea only a first and necessary step in the process of learning to philosophize, was it only a bias and reductive summary of what the pupils had learned, a sort of first-step assimilation of philosophical practice, where a momentary "Descartes style" suspension of judgment gets translated as simple relativism? Or was it indeed the basic cultural matrix conveyed by the prevailing school of thought? Was philosophizing being treated as a mere brainstorming in all directions, or was there in the minds and practices of the pedagogues who were present some other requirement needed in order to achieve their educational goals? Many of my discussions and observations during the following days—and in the present article—were aimed at investigating and analyzing the apparently prevailing conception of philosophical requirements and demands. In fact, when I mentioned my qualms in private, I was told about "true" workshops, or of some mythical "next step," or of "more accomplished" pupils. Yet, for one thing, I wondered why I did not see it; secondly, I wondered why no one said anything about this in public; and thirdly, I wondered why the facilitators themselves did not do anything about it—unless, there again, as in psychoanalysis, the Community of Inquiry is a very lengthy process, time elongating, which can only make sense by being observed over a very long period of time, in order to make sense.

### The workshops

An interesting aspect of the Varna conference was the presence of young people who were taking part in workshops, so that everyone could see how the work was being done. This is a major positive point, for in the world of philosophy one tends to privilege abstract speeches and "talking about" more than actual showing, especially in pedagogical matters, which always seem to be a secondary and merely technical question for philosophers, not worth the time and the effort. On the other side of the coin, there was the drawback that no time was allowed to analyze and discuss the practices. Furthermore, when the workshops were interrupted and adults could speak, they were more concerned with giving their opinion on the topic discussed than commenting on the functioning and the procedure of the workshop. This is a reaction which in itself is a very enlightening, but I shall come back to this later.

Let us first summarize the "basic Lipman workshop" as I saw it, which might be different from what it is elsewhere, and from what it may be or should be. After gathering in a circle, a short chapter excerpt from a Lipman or some other text is read round robin fashion by the pupils, each reading one paragraph or sentence. When this is done, the facilitator asks for questions raised by the text, and pupils raise their hands to propose one question or another, thereby producing a list of questions. The questions are then classified, and one question out of all these is chosen through a voting procedure. When this is done, a discussion takes place, in which each one says what he/she wants about the question chosen, as hands are raised and participants are successively called upon by the facilitator. I will analyze a few points that can pose problems for the functioning of this basic procedural model.

### The text as pretext

First, the initial text is not really taken into consideration. It is often referred to as a "stimulus," meaning some basic initial tool used to provoke the discussion. If this is the case, why use such a constructed text, with precise ideas implicitly present

and visibly written by a philosopher, since a number of philosophical issues and concepts are inscribed in the narration, which pretend to represent a vehicle for the reconstruction of the philosophical tradition and a model for dialogical inquiry? It is true that the information does not come already organized and totally decoded, since we have a narrative form, although it is of a very didactic nature: it still tells more than it shows. Two major reasons can be given in support of such a criticism. The first is that learning to philosophize is learning how to read—not only reading books and texts, but reading the world, the self, the other, or whatever else comes to us as well. But one of the major problems students of all ages have in reading is precisely what is encouraged in this procedural form: the given text is not taken seriously and rigorously by the reader. Often, this is why authors—whether a recognized author, a neighbour or ourselves—are often misunderstood. We project whatever we want onto it, overlook important content, declaring this or that impossible or uninteresting, and we go on with whatever we want to say, by a mere process of associative thought. How often it is that the philosophy teacher realizes that a misunderstanding of a text is only based on a skimpy reading, and that the real struggle has not taken place with the “other”. A real confrontation with otherness is absent.

One defence against this critique is that the teacher does not want to produce a mere classical textual analysis. We can respond to this, first of all, by noting that in the classical scheme it is generally the teacher who produces the analysis, not the student. And even when it is the student, the teacher will declare one analysis right and another one wrong. Yet in the case of “community of inquiry” it seems to me that the pupil could at least be invited to mention where such a question is being raised by the text, or how the text stands on such an issue, and where. If not, any question can be raised which has absolutely nothing to do with the initial text, rendering it meaningless. For if the text is “abandoned,” what is the procedure that ensures coherence in the production of questions? Is not following a subject, concentrating

on it, and making links based on it a key aspect of philosophical thinking? The same thing can be said about answers to the chosen question: why should we not, for a moment, wonder together what conceptual hints the text gives us on how to deal with the chosen question? This does not forbid us, in a second moment, to find issues that are not contained in the text, or to criticize its bias and its formulations—unless again such ideas were evoked by the text but the pupil just did not see them, or did not see how the text countered a particular answer. Hegel is useful on this point in distinguishing internal and external critique. Internal critique is the internal analysis of a given text—searching its presuppositions, blind spots, fallacies and inconsistencies. External critique is the criticism of a text using conceptual tools that are foreign to it—proposing another reading of the subject matter and confronting the content of the text with it, i.e., the confrontation of one hypothesis with another. In the first case one dismantles, strips down and short-circuits the text from the inside; in the second case, tools are brought from the outside to counter the foundation of the piece.

Secondly, even if we stick to the established procedure, which consists of producing questions and choosing one, why not propose as a rule that an argument always has to be outlined as a justification for a question? Even though argument in itself is not a sufficient for philosophizing, it does provide an entry into the identification of ideas and the process of thought construction. So let me conclude on the issue of the loose treatment of the text I witnessed that such a “free for all,” involving no confrontation with the ideas of the author, seems to encourage a certain mental sloppiness, a lack of respect for written speech, and for the “other” in general. As a result, the literary form—which could offer a refreshing kind of challenge compared to traditional philosophical texts—too easily becomes a refuge for superficial reading. This flaw would need to be kept in check by the teacher.

List of opinions

This criticism of mental sloppiness and lack of respect for the other is visible in another aspect of the process:

the absence of connections between interventions. One of the historic battles of philosophy, beginning with Plato, has been the struggle against "opinion." What basically is an opinion, on this view? An expression of opinion is a supposedly self-evident statement, which is given no justification, is unconscious of itself, being thus isolated and incapable of taking on what is addressed to or opposed to it. Of course, this is to be taken with some precaution, since one of the modes of teaching philosophy, particularly in the oriental tradition, is to drop a single phrase, an aphorism, which the master won't explain and the student has to meditate on. And who knows where the master hides! Spirit breathes where it wants, how it wants. But in the Western tradition, where we have a habit of expecting answers, explanations and proofs, the principle of the game is that ideas are developed by their author, either at the author's own initiative or by answering objections and questions addressed to him or her. Because of this, in order to back up assertions, ideas have either to follow rules of logic, to be demonstrable by elaborating a compact whole, or to be analyzable through the use of examples, etc. The result of this is that linking becomes the main thrust of the philosophical effort. It is substantial linking, says Leibniz, because in unity lies the substance, both for thinking and for being. Opinion, by contrast, is a disconnected idea or sentence, with no links whatsoever, or else with illegitimate links. So if a philosophical discussion does not construct and articulate those links, what results is a list of ideas, not necessarily wrong, but merely opinions, because insufficient work is being done on clarifying and reconstructing them.

In considering another aspect of the procedural model based on Lipman's work, the simple fact of raising one's hand and waiting for one's turn to speak is already an important step for a philosophical discussion, since as a practice it takes others into consideration. But this can be just a formal trick: I wait for my turn to say what I have to say, since I mainly want just to express myself. Maybe what I say when I am finally called on has no connection

whatsoever with the subject matter, maybe I am orienting the discussion on a very secondary issue, maybe I don't listen and don't understand anything of what is going on, etc. In fact, the way pupils are behaving in such discussions—with their arms raised while their comrades are speaking, not looking at them, just waiting for the other to finish—indicates a certain problem. Hardly any questions are being raised that would invite an author to dig deeper into his own thinking. Powerful arguments that are sometimes brought up to counter an idea are hardly picked up, just because they go unnoticed, drowned in the unending flow of opinions: in those junkyards of words, a mother cat would have a hard time recognizing her kitten. Here, the role of the teacher would be to stop the discussion, to grind it momentarily to a halt, in order to induce a thinking moment, a philosophical moment.

Let me give three cases of such possible occurrences, of such opportunities, in order to justify my criticism. The first one is when a statement has been made which deserves some attention due to its problematic potential. The teacher should ask if any one wants to deal with it through questions, analysis or objection before moving on—to take a little time to deal with a particular idea or concept in order for it to be somewhat deepened. The author of the idea should have the opportunity to develop or revisit his initial idea. The second case is when an efficient counterargument or counterexample has been put forward. Here again, before moving on the teacher should halt the discussion in order to identify the problem that has emerged—asking everyone to suspend their judgment for a moment, thus following the methodological Cartesian injunction, in order to problematise and conceptualize the discussion. After analyzing the problem, pupils can then be invited to make judgments, and to determine the right from the wrong from their standpoint, producing arguments in order to do so. Before moving back to the general discussion, by way of a momentary conclusion, the two initial authors of the problem will be asked if they have changed their mind on the issue or want to

reformulate their idea. The third possibility of intervention by the teacher is to propose a precise question to the group that will have to be dealt with immediately, probably because this question is visibly at the heart of the matter being discussed, but has to be pinpointed in order to be conscious and operative. This would also allow the group to refocus the discussion, in case they have gone off on a tangent, and traveled too far from the main subject. On this precise point, some manuals used in the Lipman method have foreseen a number of questions about leading ideas which can be used for this purpose, although the manner of their utilization is either lacking or unclear. All these types of interventions have one goal: to tighten up the discussion, to focus it, so that real philosophical work is accomplished, as opposed to brainstorming, which can be very useful but has other types of pedagogical functions.

#### Conceptual level

Plato invites the philosopher to travel the anagogic path—i.e., going back upstream toward the unity and origin of the speech, which is exactly the contrary of moving on and producing more and different ideas. This is the reflexive form, in which thinking reflects upon itself, becomes an object to itself, and the thinking subject becomes an object of the process. This is the core of the dialectical method. Through this process, it will accomplish roughly the following results: first, it identifies the presuppositions of a given speech; second, it identifies the intention of a given speech; third, it identifies the problems implicitly raised by a given speech, i.e., it problematizes it; and fourth, it conceptualizes the content of the speech, either using words included in the speech or else new words that have to be put forward. For this reason, the first level discussion has to stop in order to analyze what was done, thus interrupting the flow of new hypotheses or opinions, in order to enter a meta-level reflection.

The problem is that this process is not natural to the human mind: it implies a sort of hiatus or discontinuity. If it was totally natural, all difficulties in teaching philosophy would disappear.

Philosophizing is an artificial process, since most discussions tend primarily to follow a free path of expression, where sincerity, story telling, passionate statements, expression of belief, and associative patterns take precedence over any other type of thinking. The question for us is how and how much the teacher, who is taking responsibility for engaging the philosophical process in the workshop, is actually ensuring that this artificial process occurs. Traditionally, in the lecture form, the teacher does this work himself or herself, and the student just has to listen. The traditional teacher's idea is that if students speak, they will not philosophize; they will simply spit out mere opinions, and this fear is not unfounded. Indeed, in a "free" discussion, even though some ideas might be interesting, no in-depth systematic analysis will occur. But in both cases, lecture and free discussion, things happen as if the pupil were going to learn to philosophize by magic: no exercise is being provided, with given constraints and rules so that the pupil is invited or forced to philosophize, to abandon immediate evidence and work on the ideas. But in the workshops as I saw them, however sympathetic I found it to see pupils dealing roughly with a given subject and exchanging thoughts, it seemed to me that the teacher was not challenging them to think more profoundly. The most I saw was a teacher who took the initiative to question a pupil somewhat after a hypothesis was out forward; but not to take it further, which could have been done either by asking other pupils to question as well, or by asking the first pupil how their answer to the question had modified their initial thinking, whether they could identify some questionable presupposition in their speech, identify an issue or produce some important concept.

The idea in all this is that pupils have to be both in the discussion and outside of it. They have to be both participants and facilitators. Yet in order to do so, the facilitator's job has to be clarified: it is not only to frame the steps of the exercise and distribute speech, but to invite at all parties present in the exercise to fulfill the different philosophical functions; they have to put forth questions, formulate hypotheses,

interrogate the presuppositions, give counter-arguments, pick up contradictions, analyze ideas, produce concepts, problematise propositions, identify issues, etc. If the teacher does not show the path, does not provide the key, the pupils won't know how to do this by chance. And if the teacher does not oblige them through some means or other to shift their thinking and speech focus, they will be too engulfed in their own convictions to do it, like most human beings. It could be that the wager leading to such minimal procedures is to rely on some kind of soft, unconscious, random and intuitive process, which should itself induce philosophizing. But can we philosophize unconsciously, or is that an oxymoron? And why should we do it unconsciously, when we can do it with presence to our own thinking?

Some practical objections might be raised here, for example the problem of student numbers in the classroom, and the restrictions of time. Those constraints do not allow each student to really undergo such a process. Secondly, when one student works on his scheme, accounts for his ideas, won't the others loose attention, get disinterested and bored? There are three levels of answer to these objections. The first is the principle that in this type of activity the pupils are supposed to learn how not to centre on themselves, but to concentrate on somebody else, a fundamental characteristic of learning and growing up. Secondly, the pupil is asked permanently to be "inside" and "outside," to be simultaneously a participant and a facilitator. This implies both that pupils do not get bogged down in an exchange of opinion—that they try to conceptualize and problematise the overall discussion—and at the same time that they take on their peers through questions and analysis, so that everyone is better able to account for their own speech. If this is the case they always have an interest, unless they find it difficult to get away from a mere "What I want to say is..." Thirdly, this kind of exercise is not a speaking exercise, but a thinking exercise. And some pupils that do not speak a lot do not benefit less than others from the overall work. The question is not so much that everyone expresses themselves—although

such an expectation or hope is not excluded—but that the class as a whole can live through philosophical moments of an almost aesthetic nature, that uplift and transform their minds.

Another objection bears on group dynamics, whereby some practitioners like to have pupils always wanting to contribute their thoughts, however irrelevant, and to participate in a lively way. But one might consider that to artificially create moments where no one speaks, when all are puzzled by a particular question, and silence weighs upon the group, is a rather productive and desirable situation. Certainly it does not facilitate speech, but maybe it facilitates thinking. Maybe the “natural” learning capacities of the human mind need “artificial” means to be truly developed.

#### Thinking the unthinkable

If we take the concept of Community of Inquiry out of its specialized sense and analyze its general meaning, we can assert the principle that the other, our fellow human and mirror image, can and often will think differently than we do. We as imperfect beings always carry a bias, we are always partial, in the double sense that we only look at an infinitely minute scrap of reality, and we perceive being and world through a particular and reductive subjective prism. So the role of the other is to allow us to momentarily escape ourselves, to become conscious of another reality. In this sense, such an encounter is sufficiently beneficial in itself that we should not have to ask more from him or her than being what he or she is, and all we have to be is our own customary self. Community becomes then synonymous with opening our minds and with better thinking. But there are two other ways in which this community can be in contradiction with such a progress. The first one, a very natural reflex, is to defend one's position at all costs, to prove oneself right in the face of the others, who are perceived as a threat to our ideas. All our mental energy is then mobilized to produce arguments, to defend inch by inch what we have said, to the point of mild or even blatant bad faith. It is the principle of the legal brief, of the debating team or the argumentative discussion. Now,

producing arguments is a useful activity, which forces us to dig deeper in our own minds, but it also stops short of a philosophical inquiry: first because we attach ourselves to a given opinion, from which we will most likely not escape; secondly because we will not question our own presuppositions; thirdly because we will not or cannot enter fully into the mind of the other; fourthly because we will not problematise our own position; and fifthly because it appeals more to the strength of the ego than to truth seeking. In fact, the one who manages best in this type of discourse is maybe the one who has more to lose, since such a person engages in it in order to feed a sense of omnipotence.

The second aspect in which community can impede philosophical work is the pressure any group exerts on the individual to accept majority thinking. It may not necessarily be done in a coarse way, but simply by overlooking or too quickly dismissing an innovative, provocative and revolutionary hypothesis. Anyone who has facilitated discussions has seen such situations where the most brilliant insight has gone totally unnoticed, maybe even by the facilitator, who afterwards realizes what has been missed, misunderstood or discarded. The practical consequence of this is that if some time is not taken for each singular idea, the global mass will drown any singularity. Let us recall here the phrase of the Tao: "When all think this is the good: this is evil. When all think this is the beautiful: this is the ugly." The tendency we identified previously in the individual, to stick to one's opinion and avoid plunging one's mind in some other philosophical matrix, is greatly reinforced when this opinion receives general approval.

In opposition to such behaviour, or as a safeguard, I propose the principle of "thinking the unthinkable." This means that we do not want to think, argue and defend mainly what we think, but primarily what we do not think. What we do not think, what we cannot think, is what interests us, what concerns us. How else can we extract ourselves from our opinions, if not by making this journey into the impossible? Thus, philosophical activity becomes a

thought experiment. Yet such a concept implies a major disruption in the idea of experience, particularly for any philosophical scheme which presumes to tightly adhere to some empirical, practical and physical reality. For example, the notion of "reasonable belief" or "sound belief" dear to the pragmatists is here at odds with such an idea. For in a thought experiment the idea is to try out "odd things," somewhat like the wager of Riemann or Lobatchevsky to start a new geometry by negating what was until then the most fundamental postulate of Euclid. There is a strong dimension of game and gratuity in a thought experiment that "sound belief," which sounds so reasonable, denies. This refers as well to what Kant, in opposition to the assertorial and the apodictical, calls the problematical. The first one is an assertion, a proposition that affirms what is, the second one establishes or proves what is, but the third one envisages the mere possibility, as far fetched as it might be. And this simple possibility has, since Plato, a real status, very much connected to the specificity of philosophy. To problematise a proposition is to dig deeper into it in order to identify its limit, its flaws, for the truth of this proposition lies in the identification of this finitude.

So to come back to the actual practice, "thinking the unthinkable" means that at any time, when someone formulates a hypothesis, the first step is to try, before moving on to another idea, to find out through different technical procedures in what its absurdity lies. And in those procedures the author of the idea is not there to "defend" his baby—rather the author should be as involved as anyone else, if not more so, in searching out the flaws in that construction, in order to modify it or start it anew. Yet then again, human beings do not engage in this type of attitude unassisted: it has to be learned, with someone who consciously confronts our "normal" type of behavior—initially the teacher, then the pupils themselves, with each other, as a form of mutual education.

### Fleeing the confrontation

As mentioned earlier, I was struck by the fact that after each workshop hardly any time was devoted to discussing the conduct of the workshop, or if there was time participants did not really care to launch this kind of debate. Beyond this puzzlement, given that when practitioners meet they should very naturally discuss and compare their practice, what can be the reason for such a phenomenon? Why are there not issues emerging between the practitioners, on major themes, be they philosophical or pedagogical? There are at least two hypotheses. The first one is the authority principle, at least an intellectual one, which seems to have a strong influence on the Lipman movement. The second is the community principle, resulting from a mixture of pragmatic philosophy, American ideology, and political correctness that taints the intellectual activity of this movement. Before we go on, since I seem to be offering some strong judgments, I should simply tone them down by saying that all this is no more of a catastrophe than anything else happening in any other intellectual circle. Any organized institution will necessarily have as its trademark the ambivalence of its accomplishments and its defects. Both are generally more visible and amplified in a group of people than in a single person.

Let us start with the authority principle, since it might be the lesser cause. The first observation that strikes me is the fact that such a simple scheme as the "official" workshop—reading a story, making up questions, linking questions, choosing a question and debating it—has not been already replaced or challenged by a multitude of "recipes" or protocols. I did witness a couple of modifications, but it seemed to me to be the prerogative of a very small minority. In addition, after over twenty-five years of activity, why would not such a simple scheme undergo major changes—for the pupils as well as the teacher—in order not to get stuck in an ultimate, eternal and boring procedure? In such an international conference, we might have expected some radically different procedures to be presented. But if I saw some

contributions adding a little extra touch to the basic scheme, it did not fundamentally change the initial pattern. Now, we must recognize that even if in some countries the stories of Matthew Lipman are still recommended and used by teachers in the classroom, a number of other purpose-written materials are being used, for example Ann Sharp's *Doll's Hospital* and Philip Cam's *Thinking Stories*, and many teachers are creating their own stories. Yet it is strange to see that although in this aspect liberties have been taken, they have not in the matter of the procedure itself. In fact, some will readily present their own story as an object of discussion, but the practice itself is not an object of discussion. On the other hand, one might wonder whether it would not be better to stick to the traditional texts of the movement, since I am not sure that all the "new" texts have the philosophical content which the "founding texts" do. But this will take us to another point with which we will deal later: the general problem of the philosophical content.

Let us now deal with the community principle. A key concept of the practice is the idea of "community," as in "Community of Inquiry". Musical metaphors are used a lot to justify and explain this idea, in particular the one of "harmony." This seems to me a legitimate and healthy response to the Hobbesian atmosphere that is current in intellectual circles, where one's intelligence is assessed through an attempt to strike down the interlocutor, who is viewed as an opponent. The principle to be seen in the discussions and in the general behavior of the movement is that ideas are supposed to add and accumulate and in this way help everyone's thinking develop, as each and everyone contributes to the harmony. And when in the workshop someone does not agree with another, they might say it, but the discussion keeps moving on anyway. Never, it seems, would the discussion stay on this particular issue, at least to identify it, if not to resolve it. It is true that in this way any confrontation is avoided, since a confrontation implies a certain amount of persistence in the opposition. Even if someone persisted, since a whole number of persons raised other points in the meantime, and the person

being addressed could not respond right away, the issue was drowned out. The teacher could have played the role of an "underliner" here, but it was not the case.

Thus particular ideas get drowned in the totality, which for this reason looked to me more like a brainstorming than actual thought construction, although the two are not necessarily unrelated. Even so, there is a way in which there is a real opposition between these two attitudes. To examine ideas, to discriminate among them, taking the time to identify their determinations, to penetrate their vacuity, induces a sense of limitedness, of fragility, even of pathology of both ideas and beings. And if a free discussion palliates certain teaching problems, it feeds as well on social prejudice, since it asserts the unquestionable value of our little self and therefore of the ideas it produces. Paradoxically, this view of the collective easily leads to a non-interest in others: I just wait for my turn. For in reality, if we do not have a profound interest and attachment for the singular, how can we pretend to have interest in the collective?

This contradiction reminds us of those suburban American houses, all with the same lawns, where nothing shocking appears except the lack of difference. Everyone does what they want in their house, especially since those houses with big lawns are far apart. There is very little actual contact between neighbours, but there is an actual pressure to formally behave in the same fashion. We do not pretend that there is some possible perfect neighbourhood scheme, but let's say that the disadvantage of "community" concern is that singularity tends to be rubbed out. When true singularity, in opposition to banal individualism, has bearing on the general, it is the true founder of universality, as Socrates, Kierkegaard and others tried to show us.

On the pedagogical side, this fits very well with the politically correct anti-authoritarian excesses we have seen developing over the last few years. The idea that a given pupil, or even the teacher, would stand out as someone shedding a more powerful light on the discussion is viewed as a threat. Anything radically

standing out has to be chopped of as a menace to the community, a concept that presupposes the absence of hierarchy. The fact that a given issue raised between two pupils would be more productive than the rest of a discussion is not welcome, at least in the reality of the workshop. Naturally, pupils will not take care of this by themselves: they are too preoccupied with what they want to say, which for them is more "this" or more "that." The result is that some profound philosophical moments go unnoticed. When we all know that in a discussion that lasts for a while, there are some instants, very few of them, that make the discussion philosophical in a real sense. Those breakthroughs are the rare few words that make the total discussion really worth it—unless, that is, one thinks that the whole point of the exercise is just to let everyone express themselves.

### Pragmatism

Our last insight about this situation bears upon the pragmatic matrix in which the work is installed. Truth, in this philosophical context, emerges on the ground of the collective. It is concerned with efficiency and practical questions, and for these reasons, because it has to adapt to a changing world and society, it is more of a constructive nature than an a priori established transcendent order—a regulating principle rather than determinant principle, as Kant would say. To clarify the point, let's briefly describe two other possible conceptions of truth, in order to give a background to the analysis and show the reductionist aspect of the pragmatist perspective, like any particular perspective. The first alternative conception of truth is what can be called the truth of "reason." Reason is here perceived as a transcendent power beyond space and time that the human mind can barely pretend to unveil by scattered bits and pieces. It is of a theoretical order before a practical one, since physical reality is in a certain way only a mere reflection of the spiritual order. The second conception of truth is a subjective one. Here truth is singular, although in this singularity lies a profound path that leads to universality. The primary form of this truth

would be authenticity, the characteristic of a person that is true. And this person has to give account neither to the community, nor to reason, but primarily to himself or herself, although these different parameters do not have to be excluded.

The consequences of the pragmatic choice are, of course, that the practical, collective and efficient side of the activity is the main preoccupation. The fact that one does practice "community of inquiry" and therefore belongs to the "community" is the anchor and reference point. How one does it is not an issue: the nature and mode of the relation is not problematised. As a consequence, each one does what they want in their own corner. In reality, this practice can be reduced to something very minimal, a minimalism which from my standpoint has a rather skimpy relation to a philosophical practice. Yet no one will take this on, since the harmony of the community is a primary concern, and the fact that everyone nominally is involved in such a practice is the primary if not the only concern. The non-confrontational aspect is therefore a constitutive part of the attitude, both in the exercise itself and the relationship between practitioners, in order to preserve "harmony". So rather than challenging someone on the adequacy of their practice, its conformity with the initial idea or philosophy itself, one prefers to just do what the other does, talk about it, and not engage in a comparison with one's colleague's work: criticism is *de facto* banned. Whatever one thinks about the other and their way of doing things has to be kept private: it is only one's personal concern. The addition of personal contributions will by miracle ensure that philosophy goes on. Any major theoretical discussion bearing on individual practice would be unproductive, since it would imply pronouncing judgments on individual practitioners and potentially generate conflict. One of the consequences of this posture is that the teacher, reproducing this same attitude in their classroom activity, will become a mere facilitator, who does not engage in philosophical confrontation and work. But can one avoid philosophizing, challenging ideas, and really make one's students philosophize?

Of course, such a system can work, in its own fashion, just like any other system. It will benefit from its own genius and suffer from its own drawbacks. As I have said, it will avoid the bickering so endemic to usual relationships in academia. It will avoid the kinds of inquisitions and denunciations so typical of intellectual life. In this way, it will facilitate self-engagement in the practice itself, since the requirements are somewhat minimal. And one can of course postulate that all practitioners, whether students or teachers, will progress at their own pace, the main point being that they launch themselves into the activity. At the same time, however, one might wonder about the contribution of each particular practice to the pedagogical and philosophical enhancement of the classroom. Although we can conclude that in view of the hegemony of the traditional lecture, introducing discussion in the classroom is in itself an improvement, even though the content itself may leave much to be desired.

#### Theory and practice

Nothing is more banal than the gap or discrepancy between theory and practice. It is a usual hiatus, since pedagogical practitioners have a more empirical approach, based on the reality of their classroom, bounded by their own skills, their limitations and their finite time, while theoreticians, freer of these constraints, can in turn fall into the trap of formal constructions, disconnected from the reality of plurality and otherness. In the particular case of the "Community of Inquiry," the specificity of the problem is twofold. First, the initiator and creator of the program is not himself a practitioner, in the sense of someone constantly and regularly involved in the practice, which is relatively the same for other leading figures of the movement. Secondly, the program is of a philosophical nature, but many of the practitioners do not have a philosophical culture. To that extent, one may wonder whether the activity itself is still of a philosophical nature.

The program itself, as it is conceived, is based around two parts: the stories and the manual.

Although the stories, as narration, have an implicit philosophical content, the manual, more developed, introduces concepts and issues. One can very well use only the narration, all the same, and this seems to happen quite often. Furthermore, since the text itself does not have to be thoroughly studied, for reasons already outlined, the actual philosophical content of the material can be totally overlooked in favor of a mere procedure that leads to free discussion more than anything else. Now, if the teacher studies the manual and the narration properly, and ensures that the pupils do so as well, real philosophical work can occur, even though one might want for different reasons to propose to change this or that. But nothing in the discussion of the practice encourages or promotes delving into philosophical culture and context, or so I noticed in what I was able to witness.

The principle of starting with a narration and conceptualizing it is an innovative and productive exercise. Since the narrations are of a quite crude didactic nature, however, one may wonder why pieces of classical literature, folk tales or traditional myths could not play the same role. They contain as much philosophy and have the advantage of multiple level readings, since they have depth and contain many ambiguities, are of poetic nature and appeal to the fundamental archetypes of human existence, experience and knowledge. In addition, the stories presented by Matthew Lipman and his team can be criticized as being very American, given that they are supposed to be used by children of all countries. On the other hand, if one wants to reconstruct a very precise philosophical curriculum, the principle of didactic texts designed for each age group can be very well understood.

As for the manual, one can wonder as well about its utility. Either the teacher has a philosophical background and does not need the manual to conceptualize the narration, or he or she does not possess such a background, and won't really be able to do this work, since it would be too mechanical and artificial to use readymade questions. This is especially likely since those concepts and issues, which

are called "leading ideas", are supposed to be introduced in a classroom discussion, without imposing a content. A certain ability would here be required that goes beyond knowing the list of questions and concepts that are already given. It is one thing to go through ideas and explain them, and another to play with them by subtly introducing them in a discussion at the appropriate moment, making connections with what is already being said so it does not seem to fall upon the class like a *deus ex machina*. We know by experience that nothing is more difficult for trained philosophy teachers than to convey ready-made established ideas, taken from a curriculum, for the purpose of enlightening student talk. This is first because the connections are often not obvious—one has to develop a good philosophical ear and a certain flexibility—and, secondly, because the teacher is strongly tempted to fall into the trap of the lecture when he is asked to give only hints, in the form of questions for example. But after all, one can contend that there is no method that can do without the artistic capacity and creative talents of the teacher. But as we have already said, the general result is that teachers fall back on the option of a minimalist perspective and just let the pupils freely discuss, with few requirements and demands. This is where more precise and in-depth work would probably be needed on the actual practice itself. Maybe what should be reconsidered are the modalities of teacher training.

### Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, I must plead some ignorance of the subject talked about in this paper. This is so particularly in terms of how philosophy with children is practiced, adapted and modified variously worldwide, and thus I may have overlooked certain aspects obvious to more experienced practitioners or writers in the field. How to conclude this analysis, if not by the fact that the Lipman movement has one primary quality: it already exists. And after all, not only does it exist, but it continues to develop in many countries, providing here and there an important contribution to pedagogy, because it is definitely in

this particular field that de facto, the activity inscribes itself. Certainly there is a philosophical touch to it, but the attempt to reconstruct philosophy as a curriculum for children seems to fall short. As I have said, the intention is probably there, but the actual practice does not carry through the will of the founders. So what is left? Let us look at different characteristics of philosophy. First, philosophy as a domain is touched upon, since many existential and epistemological questions are being treated. Secondly, philosophy as an attitude is largely present, since all hypotheses can be expressed, analyzed and thought about. But thirdly, philosophical abilities and competencies are not encouraged enough: they can be deployed, but their development relies too much on the natural inclinations and dispositions of the teacher. In this aspect, the procedure, as open as it is, is lacking in rigor and needs innovations that could enhance its nature. Fourthly, philosophy as a culture is present in the texts, but since the written material is underused for different reasons, it again depends merely on the culture acquired by the teacher and the teacher's capacities to exploit them and render it operative.

To my knowledge, a majority of practitioners in the movement are specialists in pedagogy, and in most countries the study of philosophy with children occurs in pedagogy departments. This situation is probably due to the actual state of mind of academic philosophy, which recoils before anything that is not of a very classical nature. Even discussion itself is revolutionary for academic philosophy, since it is an activity that does not result in much success: in the mind of many professors, discussion with students refers to mere expression of opinions, and discussions among scholars are so polluted with ego than they are often impossible. At best, those exchanges are often reduced to a polite, minimal, administrative and formal ritual. Because of this, it is possible that the Lipman movement is compromising its own integrity as a program in order to stay alive, as a mere pedagogical innovation. In this context, the mixture with sociology and psychology that seems a tempting and current orientation might definitely install the practice in the

purely pedagogical realm, with slight philosophical overtones. The strong concern with democracy as well might lead the practice on a very different path, since it is far from proven that philosophy and democracy make a good and lasting marriage, even though democracy needs philosophy and vice versa.

Philosophy with children reminds me in a certain way of critical thinking—a very broad and indeterminate activity, which oscillates between the meaningless and the essential. Yet this indetermination, in spite of the risks it involves, may offer the kind of space needed for creative and innovative work by constructing a field not saturated yet by a very precise and loaded demand. It may be that the creative qualities that it relies upon, which might be viewed as a drawback, may as well be perceived as an advantage. It could be that we have here a wager on human reason and intelligence. Does it really matter if it does or does not merit the title “philosophical”? To the extent that reflection still takes place on the nature and the utility of such an exercise, feeding its hopes on a dynamic of qualitative growth, such questioning may in itself and in time confirm the philosophical nature of the activity.

## Practical thinking on bigger ideas

Greg Smith (St Joseph's College, Brisbane)<sup>1</sup>

As discussion starters for my recent communities of inquiry with Year 6, 7, and 8 students, I have been focusing on the ethics of everyday life. I have been looking at the topic of Acting Thoughtlessly (Ethical Inquiry, Manual to Accompany Lisa, Ch.10 Episode 24, p. 363). I have found that the articulation of the ethics of everyday events and their consequences is good practical thinking for generating bigger thoughts.

I have always found that students in the middle years of schooling relate very readily to ethical considerations of everyday issues. Events happen and only sometimes do students engage in some private reflection upon them. Yet the power of the Community of Inquiry is that we are articulating upon the causes, structures and consequences of such events together. The ethics of adolescent embarrassment have previously prevented the students from such open and often revealing considerations of their feelings and a public appreciation of the feelings of others. These experiences have been truly heartening.

Being considerate and thoughtful of others is a sign of maturity. Everyone agrees that acting impetuously and regardless of the feelings of others is very common but totally abhorrent. The students report that they feel the impact of others' thoughtlessness upon themselves. The students readily reported very many examples of adults and

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children acting unthinkingly, of people not regarding the consequences of their actions.

"Leading Idea No 1" (p. 84) in that Manual explicates the moral imagination, the learnt body of experience that enables us to live social lives with facility and grace so that we can conduct our daily lives without necessarily offending everyone. The ten different questions there explore the concept of "being a good person" in various hypotheticals and considerations upon thoughtlessness.

In various discussions in the communities of inquiry I facilitated, we explored unintended consequences as the moral responsibilities we hold towards one another in society. In detail, we engaged in explorations of the concepts, "thoughtfulness" and "considerateness." We noted how they belong to a class of social skills that make ours and others' lives liveable when we interact with the public, with our community and in our families. We found it is true that in accumulating social learning, we develop the moral imagination, where we can imagine the effects of our words and actions upon others.

In one extended discussion this term, we distinguished little things from bigger things to perceive how neglect of little things might give offence more than an awareness of bigger things. Forgetting one's wife's birthday was an example of forgetting little things that count. It was agreed that knowing the state of the nation or the physics of rocketry was all very well, but giving attention to what other people rate as the details making up daily life really does mark out a person as a good person, a considerate person.

The children's search for even more pertinent examples and the effort to articulate the impact of those examples helped them to define these concepts of "good person" and "considerateness." We found that a person can be less moral or more moral depending not on the worth or impact of their raw words or actions but more powerfully on their intentions. So we concluded that it was important not to judge on appearances but we had to search to find out people's intentions. We dwelt on the worth of conveying our

intentions to others. The classroom communities' inquiries upon instances of accidentally giving offence, of finding that other students were suffering social exclusion, in bullying, racism or sexism for example, led to the agreement that we need to make more strenuous efforts at times to be aware of others' feelings. Such people will hide their hurts; considerate and thoughtful people on the contrary will tune in to these perceptions and work to ameliorate them.

A second topic we have been pursuing this term is, as always in middle school, the ethical topic of fairness. I usually use the "Discussion Plan: What is fairness?" in the Lisa Manual (No.20, p. 63) to great effect. But recently I came upon a list of relevant examples I scavenged from a past community of inquiry conference, not sourced as is often the case with conference handouts giving critical examples for testing the concept of fairness.<sup>2</sup> The material envisages various cards for consideration, each card giving a testing example. I have found these to be very useful texts for discussion starters with these young adolescents. Everyone can concentrate on a short example from life.

The philosophical skills to be developed in these lessons include agreeing, disagreeing and finding partial agreements. Our discussions demanded this variety of outcomes. At the finish of one session in particular, the students reported that they found the discussions very revealing for surveying the greater variety of responses in the group than some individuals anticipated. They found that not everything is so cut and dried—everyone's different perceptions, experiences and cultural frameworks differ so much more than expected so that notional expectations about likely responses fell short. Two brave individuals actually admitted that for once they had changed their minds in the community of inquiry—usually they believed that they were always right. I was delighted.

Our critical examples on the cards asked whether it is unfair not to be able to do the physical

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<sup>2</sup> See Clinton Golding's *Connecting Concepts* for similar materials.

impossible—for example to fly. This example was dealt with relatively quickly as obvious, but it established the parameters of rigour, looking for depth and searching for reasonableness in what we were saying. We moved to the next example: withholding your property from others. Issues of lending, loans and borrowing are very pertinent to adolescents. Adolescents are at different stages in understandings of property rights and obligations about sharing of property. Sharing or borrowing an eraser can become so everyday that implied understandings about the relationship can become blurred to the extent that the presumed right to borrow becomes an index of one's friendship, or alternatively one's refusal of companionship or friendship. It happens every time in Community of Inquiry—you say something and a flood of instances tumbles out. Applications, hypotheses, causal connections and critical instances soon arose to entertain, test and tease us. Property seems so practical a topic and yet is so evocative of the bigger ideas about life.

I found the example of breaking your own toys is very productive. It raises many productive bigger ideas and questions such as: What is absolute ownership? What is conditional ownership? What are the consequences of my own actions on my own property? When does the act of ownership cease? Are there conditions on gift giving even from parents to children? Do I need to be considerate of others in every instance and circumstance of neglect, injury or destruction of toys? These questions do indeed echo current political questions in the State of Queensland when it comes to land clearing on private property. It was all happening in the dynamic of our classroom!

We established important distinctions between permanent and repairable damage, between intentional and accidental destruction, between wear and tear and destruction, and between defiance and thoughtlessness. This was community of inquiry at its best. The students were able to make distinctions, to assess the priorities of their imagined cases, were able to put words to experiences, and were able to come to

some agreements about the worth and abhorrence of some examples they supplied.

Finally the given examples tested us on our understandings of social awareness, ethical duties and legitimate rights of ownership. Issues of reward for effort, rights from achievement, natural and given rights, and chance and opportunity opened up many other valuable considerations before the bell rang.

Our communities of inquiry this term have been very rewarding and insightful. The same topic taken at different age levels reveals many more life experiences and depth of insight upon them. What amazed me was the depth of compassion among students for the feelings others may or do feel. Their sense of shame about causing hurt and their determination to be more aware of considerateness and thoughtfulness in their words and actions was edifying. I do so enjoy taking Community of Inquiry among young active minds! Practical thinking on the little details can indeed bring us to in-depth considerations of some Bigger Ideas.

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## Review of John Langrehr, *Thinking Lessons: Critical & Creative Thinking for the Middle Years*

Illustrated by Caanan Grall (Carlton South, VIC: Curriculum Corporation, 2003). ISBN 1 87697 383 8. 96 pages A4 format

Greg Smith (St. Joseph's College, Brisbane)

John Langrehr is already well-known and published in Australia and this book does him credit again. This timely book stresses thinking processes: the organisational, analytical/ critical, evaluative, and creative processes involved in mathematics, language, social studies and science. The book is attractively set out under these four major areas with a roughly equal number of lessons for each. A variety of attractive grids and graphics, key terms set in bold type and short modelling examples would appeal to children in middle primary years. Although the Introduction says it is the book is designed for students in "the middle school age range", for some of us that also covers Years 6-9. So some adaptations might be necessary for older students in the secondary years of Middle Schooling.

Langrehr has covered a traditional range of thinking processes: observing, categorising, comparing, analysing, distinguishing consequences and creative thinking very well. The text is large and vocabulary relatively simple enough for the teacher to read it aloud in class as if from a story book. His use of the Size, Colour, Uses, Materials, Parts, Shape (SCUMPS) acronym as an aid to organising thinking is re-stressed when appropriate. One useful feature to help the busy teacher is that possible answers are supplied on the page facing the questions.

The book is somewhat sequential as a program of twenty-four thinking lessons that could be taken as one per week through the year. Alternatively, a

teacher in the community of inquiry could support a skill arising in discussion by using that lesson in a stand-alone fashion. To this end, the lessons in A4 format already could be readily copied as an overhead or handout sheet. This is particularly useful in Lesson Eleven: Analysing Patterns in Sequences, where sequences of numbers and letters and images need to be presented accurately so that patterns can be grasped.

As a facilitator in the Community of Inquiry, I imagine myself using the two lessons called 'separating facts from opinions', and 'distinguishing definite from indefinite conclusions' (inferences) in particular. Efforts have been made to relax the technical language. Aware of costs these days, I would see the book as a teacher resource rather than a text for students.

I must say as an English and Humanities teacher, I would have appreciated the inclusion of some prose texts to demonstrate these logic skills in operation in situ as it were. Rather than re-invent the wheel with artificially constructed texts for this purpose; there are very many child-friendly prose texts in social studies and literature that could be locations for the study of these thinking processes. As this is the third in a series, may I invite the publishers to consider our need to deal with thinking processes as they are embedded in such texts rather than as Friday morning drills? That very real need we face in the teaching of literacy might well be addressed in the next production in the series.

## FAPSA in New Zealand: Chair's Report 2004-5

Vanya Kovach

The executive of the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) has been held by Aotearoa/New Zealand for the past two years, and in 2006 passes to the Victorian Association of Philosophy in Schools (VAPS). During those two years there has been an increase in interest in Level One training in most regions in Australasia, but no further Level Two (teacher educator) workshops were held. The next Level Two will be in Victoria early next year. Also during those two years a FAPSA website was constructed in outline form. Content (including links to regional sites) will be added in 2006.

The major event for FAPSA in the past two years was the first FAPSA Conference in New Zealand. This took place in Auckland in September 2005, and was well attended, with 88 participants from New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and France. Three streams were offered: (1) Philosophy for Children, (2) Developing Philosophy as a Secondary School Subject in New Zealand (with financial support for the University of Auckland Philosophy Department's Woods Bequest Fund) and (3) a series of user-friendly introductions to topics and issues in Philosophy, offered by staff from the Department of Philosophy. We had excellent feedback on all streams, and New Zealanders. One nice feature of the conference was that participants were invited to bring along contributions to a "Glorious Grab Bag" of favourite resources, and many people contributed stories, discussion plans and innovative classroom strategies of their own devising. All conference attendees went home with this wonderfully rich resource.

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